

LONDON SOCIETY.

MARCH, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

By Mrs. J. H. RIDDELL.

CHAPTER XVII.

COLONEL LESCHELLES IS ASTONISHED.

WITH stories, quotations, and oftentimes more serious conversation on subjects of which even worldly men must occasionally take thought, Mr. Wright beguiled his visitor until the morning came round when all that remained of the Squire was to be laid in the ground.

To the brilliant sunshine which had made such brightness on Christmas Day, even in the Essex Marshes, there succeeded a dull leaden sky, giving promise of more snow, and more after that.

In due time the promise was fulfilled. The heavens were opened, and snow fell for two days and nights without cessation.

'God bless me!' said the Curate, looking out at the untrodden road and the churchyard, where the graves were buried under a mysterious pall of white, soft flakes, 'I don't know—I don't, indeed, know how we are going to bury that poor fellow at all.'

And indeed, had his relations not been hungering and thirsting to know the contents of his will, in all probability the body of Squire Olier might have lain quietly enough in his own room at the Grange till the weather moderated; but as matters stood each man and

each woman interested in the testamentary disposition of his property felt it was unseemly for him to keep the rightful owner out of possession beyond eight days. Accordingly, at the end of that time the late Squire's remains were carried to the churchyard, where, by dint of bribes and by liberal allowances of strong liquors, a grave had been prepared; and, while the mourners stood ankle deep in snow, which had already drifted again over the ground cleared for them to occupy—while the sleet soaked through Mr. Wright's surplice, and wetted the leaves of the open Prayer-book—while the wind moaned over the mournful expanse of lands stretching away to the river and the German Ocean, and the hair of those gathered round the place where their dear brother departed was to be wrapped up till eternity, was dripping as if they had one and all just emerged from a bath, the Curate read the funeral service over all that was left of Squire Olier.

A few minutes, and the words, few and solemn, had been spoken, dust was gone down into the dust, ashes were returned to ashes. Ere long, one dark mound could be distinguished in the churchyard,

looking like a rent in a white mantle worn over a black dress; but soon the falling snow covered that away from sight also. From a window in the vicarage, Mr. Wright noticed the flakes falling thick and soft on the Squire's grave.

'Poor fellow!' he thought, 'his was a lonely life, and he is even more lonely in death than men are usually. By this time those harpies know how the property is left.'

Which was correct. By that time the harpies, who had stopped for a few minutes at the vicarage, on their return from the funeral, to swallow some brandy, were in the wainscoted parlour, where Mr. Wright had received Colonel Leschelles, listening to the last codicil in the late Squire's will. In it was left, in token of kindness and good-will, a hundred guineas to Louis Leschelles, his cousin. As for the bulk of the estate, it was willed to a certain Charles Olier, hateful for many reasons to most of his kinsfolk. Being in Norway at the time of Squire Olier's death, he did not chance to be present. So those to whom no legacies were left, and their number seemed legion, were forced to vent their anger on the only person within their reach, Colonel Leschelles.

'What right had he to a hundred guineas or a hundred pence?' they asked each other, and eventually asked him.

'I must decline to answer that question,' said the Colonel stiffly, who, having heard from Mr. Wright that Squire Olier's estate might have been his almost for the picking up, felt, perhaps, a little natural disappointment at having been, if remembered at all, remembered to so little purpose; and then, after bowing to the assembled company, he left the room, and made his way back to the vicar-

age, where he had consented to remain for another night.

'Well?' said the Curate interrogatively, as he opened the door to welcome his visitor.

'Charles Olier has the property. There are the usual legacies. Several worthy people seem mightily disappointed, and I am a richer man by a hundred guineas than I was a fortnight ago.'

'Charles Olier!' exclaimed Mr. Wright. 'Why, he has the name of being a second Elwes. They say he would skin a —— Ahem!' finished the Curate, who had for the moment allowed excitement to triumph over rigid decorum.

'And sell the hide,' finished the Colonel. 'Yes; what is said is quite true, I am afraid.'

'You might have had the place,' went on the Curate, 'if ——'

'If "ifs and ands," you remember,' quoted Colonel Leschelles, with a smile. 'Yes; I suppose I might if an "if" and an "and" had both been different. As matters stand, however, it is a matter of no consequence to me. That which we have never expected it can be no disappointment not to receive, and, I am thankful to say, I have enough, and more than enough to satisfy all my wants.'

That night the Curate, feeling, probably, the fact of Squire Olier being buried and his will read had removed a weight from his mind, proved himself a more agreeable companion than ever; in fact, so agreeable did he continue to make Colonel Leschelles think him that the gallant officer voluntarily promised to spend Christmas with Mr. Wright, in whatever part of the three kingdoms that gentleman might be, so long as the Colonel remained in England.

'And I only wish I had a fat rectory in my gift,' added the officer, 'you should have it without the asking.'

Whereupon Mr. Wright, with a sly twinkle in his eyes, quoted the last line of the epigram which commences—

‘A vicar long ill who treasured up
wealth,
Bade his curate each Sunday to pray
for his health,’

and ends with the curate’s reply to a somewhat impertinent inquirer into the state of his own feelings—

‘I’ve ne’er prayed for his Death, though
I have for his Living.’

Within a few weeks after Colonel Leschelles’ departure there arrived at the vicarage a note from Mr. Wright’s late visitor, accompanied by a gold watch and chain, of which the Curate’s acceptance was requested in a few kindly and well-chosen words.

It is needless to say the Curate accepted the gift in a note containing many words.

‘A most appropriate present,’ thought Mr. Wright, laying aside the turnip-shaped, white-faced silver repeater, inherited from his father, he had hitherto been fain to wear; and indeed so it proved.

‘The watch and chain were always,’ so the Curate often remarked to Mrs. Wright, ‘as good as twenty pounds to them;’ and before many years had elapsed twenty pounds had been so often raised upon the articles that one facetious jeweller remarked to his foreman he thought they might be trusted to come to his shop alone.

If Mr. Wright had ever calculated the price he paid for that money, he would have found it considerably exceeded the probable first cost of the trinkets.

In whatever straits the family found themselves about Christmas time—and their straits then were occasionally very grievous—money was generally procured to rescue Mr. Wright’s watch from the ac-

commodating Israelite who held it in charge for so large a portion of each year; or if that were impossible, he at least liberated his chain from the enemy’s hands, and attached to it the old-fashioned repeater, which, not being worth a sixpence, was always at home and available when its more valuable relative was detained abroad on particular business.

Of course, on such occasions, Colonel Leschelles knew well enough the second calling of the watchmaker who was ‘regulating’ his present, but, being a man of the world, he took the Wrights as he found them, and acknowledged to his own heart that many persons with whom he was acquainted, and who took care of their jewellery for themselves, were not one-half so pleasant, or so hospitable, or so lively as the impetuous clergyman and his wife.

Long before Mr. Wright became rector of Fisherton, Colonel Leschelles had been made free of the state of his affairs. At a very early period of their acquaintance, Mr. Wright had requested his good friend—‘whom I hope eventually to call my old friend,’ added that accomplished letter-writer in a parenthesis—‘to lend him an amount which, though it would no doubt seem ridiculously small to one blessed with such abundance,’ meant temporal salvation to the Curate, his dear Selina, his children, including a recently-arrived baby, and every creature connected with the establishment. ‘In a sentence,’ said Mr. Wright, after having devoted many sentences to the explanation, ‘I am goaded almost to madness by the want—remember little things are great to little people—of twenty-five pounds. I know, my dear Colonel, you are just the man to help a friend at such a pinch, and will not despise him for this

frank confession. I inclose my I O U for the amount, which I shall repay, D.V., in three months, with thanks and interest at five per cent. per annum, and shall feel eternally obliged if you will send me your cheque, open if possible, by return of post.'

To which the Colonel diplomatically replied, that as he had few good friends, and could not afford to lose the regard of any one of those few, on principle he always refused to *lend* money.

'If a man,' he explained, 'lent money, it could only be in the expectation of having it repaid at some not remote period, when it might be most unpleasant to the borrower to have the subject mentioned. At the same time,' he added, 'I am always most anxious to help a friend if it lies in my power to do so, and I therefore, with much regret that I am unable to send the whole of the amount you name, inclose my cheque for ten pounds, which I beg you will consider as in every respect your own, and deal with accordingly.'

'He is no fool, Selina,' was Mr. Wright's comment on this epistle. 'He knows no gentleman can ask another to give him money, and that after such a letter I can never trouble him again.'

'But you are surely not going to return the cheque?' cried out Mrs. Wright in alarm.

'No, my dear, I am going to keep it as a *personal favour* to him. From *any other* man I could not, of course, accept ten pounds as a gift. Why, he is a comparative stranger!'

'Almost a total stranger,' agreed Mrs. Wright; and then the humour of the thing struck her, and, being slightly hysterical, she laughed long and heartily at Dion's way of 'putting things.'

When Mr. Wright took posses-

sion of the living of Fisherton, Colonel Leschelles was older than had been the case when he first met the clergyman in Essex Marshes. If he did not note the fact, the Reverend Dionysius and his better-half were more astute.

Already they were thinking about his will and the legacy he might leave to them or one of the dear children; and once when Mr. Wright was carving the Christmas turkey he caught himself considering how much the Colonel had aged, and wondering how he would cut up, and who were likely to get the best slices.

'God forgive me!' thought poor Mr. Wright, thumping himself on the chest; 'I am no better than those Olier vultures who, smelling the carcase afar off, gathered hoping to have share of the spoil.' From which it will be seen that the Rector had moments of self-accusation and repentance, and that, although he generally went about the world thanking the Lord he and Selina were not as other men and women, it sometimes did occur to him that they were not a whit better than the publicans and sinners who contributed to their need.

On the Christmas Eve following Miss Miles' arrival at Fisherton, the Rector was, however, for once able to meet his visitor with a cheerful face which masked no ugly thoughts of legacies or creditors.

Everything in this life is comparative, and for the Rector to have no writs or summonses pressing immediately for attention meant probably as much ease of mind as it does to a millionaire to have secured a picture at his own price, or to have outbidden a rival in the matter of some precious edition.

Colonel Leschelles arrived about five o'clock, and it was as good as

a puppet-show to see the Rector's greeting.

He did not say a word in the first fulness of rejoicing. With his head turned a little on one side, he clasped the Colonel's hand with a pressure which implied, 'I am too glad to see you to be able to tell you how happy I feel to have you here once more;' and, indeed, his manner did convey all this, and more.

'God bless you!' he murmured at length. 'Welcome again to Fisherton. Come in, come in. Don't stay out in the cold. Let me settle with the man. There, now we have got you to ourselves again. Selina! Where's Selina? My dear, the Colonel has come.'

Considering that Selina had been expecting his arrival for half an hour previously, the visitor's appearance could scarcely have proved a surprise to Mrs. Wright; but, coming out of the drawing-room, arrayed, in honour of the Colonel, in a silk dress made with a low bodice and short sleeves, a scarf over her shoulders, bracelets of no particular material, or beauty, or worth, on her arms, her back hair wreathed round a comb in a variety of singular and charming devices, and the eternal curls falling in a graceful, not to say pathetic, manner on each side of her face, Mrs. Wright really acted a pleasant little byplay of surprise admirably.

With a heightened colour, and a smile which was sweet as well as plaintive, and a light of greeting in her eyes, which no affectation could have kindled, she took his hand in both of hers, and, saying in her pretty Irish accent—that accent which sounds so sweet falling from the lips of a gentlewoman when she does not give one too much of it—'I am very glad to see you, indeed,' lifted her eyes for a moment to the

Colonel's face, then modestly withdrew them from a contemplation of his features; but that moment told her a tale.

'My dear,' she said to the Rev. Dion, while Colonel Leschelles, making his toilet in the apartment vacated by Miss Miles, was thinking that with his figure, by Jove, he might pass for not more than forty or forty-five when the weather was mild and he was not pulled up with that confounded rheumatism, 'My dear, he gets awfully old. I think he must have added at least twenty years to his age since I saw him last.'

'Pooh!' was the Rector's answer. 'You only think so because you have been latterly looking continually upon young faces. The Colonel can't put back the clock, even with the help of tight frock-coats and leaden combs; but it is not running on with him, and so much the better. Good people are scarce, and we cannot afford to part with one of them—before his appointed time,' added the Rector, with that sudden recollection of his vocation which was sometimes so absurd, and yet always so genuine.

Excepting upon Christmas and New Year Days, which were, of course, regarded by the young people at Fisherton as occasions when they had 'an immemorial right to make the lives of visitors a weariness to them, Mr. and Mrs. Wright did not cluster their olive branches round the family mahogany at the same hour when Colonel Leschelles solemnly partook of dinner.

In truth, he would not have come to them if they had to his dulled senses introduced the prattle of children, and expected him to listen to it.

The Colonel did not love any children. Elderly gentleman fond

of their own personal comfort, mental or physical, rarely are; and he certainly had in his creed no saving clause which exempted the juvenile Wrights from a place in his bad books.

As has before been hinted, these young people were not charming, save in the estimation of their parents; and Colonel Leschelles was not their parent of either sex, for which deliverance the misguided man thanked God.

If the truth must be told, as it ought always to be in fiction, Mr. Wright was secretly pleased by the consequences of his friend's idiosyncrasy.

Mr. Wright loved his children, but he also loved his dinner; and after a man has carved for a dozen, his own share of the repast is not usually eaten with much relish.

He was too wise a husband, however, to hint anything of this feeling to Selina, but it is a fact that the triangular meal eaten in company with Colonel Leschelles and Mrs. Wright was very grateful to the Rector. More especially as the Colonel, under pretence of having been ordered to drink the produce of one especial vineyard, provided his own wine—and more of it than he could have consumed himself had he staid at Fisherton for three months.

Mr. Wright candidly confessed he did like a glass of sound port, or a sip of thoroughly good dry sherry, but beyond these things he far preferred the Colonel's Madeira, which was stated, Heaven knows with what truth, to have been twice round the Cape.

The Madeira itself never spoke of its travels—on the principle, perhaps, that 'good wine needs no bush.'

Further, in the pop of a champagne cork there was something

which brought out all the hidden virtues of Mr. Wright's nature.

The way in which he spoke of his 'dear friend,' when the first glass had been swallowed and approved, might have converted a misanthrope; whilst the way in which he seconded the Colonel's hint that Mrs. Wright had no wine, and pressed a second bumper on Selina, with a little nod of the head, and a cunning, 'Now, now, my love; drink it up; it will do you good,' was simply indescribable.

'What!' he would exclaim, 'get into your head? Nonsense! I'll be bound your head is far too wise a one to let it do anything of the kind. You are tired out; that is what you are, and you want something to put new life into you. Come, don't put a slight upon our good friend's magnificent wine. You won't get anything like this in a hurry again—take my word for that, and I taste a good deal of what is called first-quality champagne when I am asked to dine at great men's tables.'

Apparently shocked by this barefaced flattery, Mrs. Wright would say, 'Hush, Dion; Colonel Leschelles is not accustomed to your Irish frankness.' To which Mr. Wright would reply:

'Ah, my dear, you'll never make an Englishman of me. I must say out my mind; and I don't think it much matters what I say before our kind friend here. He has known me too long not to understand me thoroughly.'

And indeed this was quite true. The Colonel did understand Mr. Wright thoroughly, and could have said pretty accurately what the Rector's pretty speeches were worth.

Nevertheless, he liked to stay with the Wrights. He liked being looked up to, and he liked being flattered. There are many people

who, without being aware of the fact, are of one mind with Colonel Leschelles on these matters.

'Don't you think, Dion,' said Mrs. Wright to her husband, a few days before that Christmas Eve of which this story is now treating, 'that Maria might as well dine with us while the Colonel is here? She is getting old enough to appear in company, and she would balance the table nicely.'

'I am afraid we mustn't risk it,' answered the Rector. 'In the first place, Colonel Leschelles might not like the change; in the next, we should be sowing seeds of disunion between Maria and her sister; and, in the third place, you can't have Maria without having Bella Miles, and five would be no number at all.'

'I could explain the matter to Bella,' remarked Mrs. Wright.

'I don't think you could,' was the reply. 'If we are to have a fourth person at dinner, that fourth should be Mr. Irwin's niece.'

Whereupon Mrs. Wright took refuge in her usual remark—'I suppose you know best, dear!'

'I am sure I do in this instance,' said the Rev. Dion valiantly.

There were times when he openly took precedence of his wife's intellect, and shook hands with himself without disguise in her presence. But he did not thus thwart Mrs. Wright very frequently. As a rule he deferred to Selina's superior judgment, and then took his own way, privately if possible, apologetically if necessary.

So it was settled that Maria should not dine with her elders; and the Colonel had therefore his repast in peace and quietness.

After dinner—that is to say, after the soup and the fish and all the other courses had come and gone—after dessert had been trifled with, and all the wines tried with

judicial slowness and calmness—after coffee had been served, and the Colonel had declared he never tasted such coffee out of France as that to be met with at Fisherton—Mr. Wright said:

'Should you like to step up and see the decorations in our church? The ladies are just putting the finishing touches to them. We shall show something out of the common to-morrow, I can assure you.'

'My dear Wright,' answered the Colonel, 'I have no doubt the decorations will be everything they ought to be in your church; but I would not leave your hospitable fireside to-night for all the wreaths, and crosses, and mottoes, and holly and laurel in Christendom.'

'Just as you like,' cheerfully agreed the Rector. 'But I must go my rounds. I must inspect my fair regiment. Each profession has its toils as well as its pleasures.'

'I know who would have commanded, had my regiment been composed of ladies,' remarked Colonel Leschelles. 'But don't delay duty on my account. I will have a chat with Mrs. Wright in your absence. I always like talking to Mrs. Wright.'

'And Mrs. Wright likes talking to you,' said the Rector, with all his accustomed heartiness. 'She is out of the way of congenial society here. As she says, from one month's end to another, not a soul calls with whom she can exchange an idea.'

With which compliment to the grasp of the Colonel's intellect, implied and understood, Mr. Wright went off to church, leaving his wife *tête-à-tête* with their visitor.

'Dion!' called Mrs. Wright after him, 'mind you bring the girls back with you. Maria has got a cold already, and we must not have any invalids in the house at Christmas time.'

'Well, my dear, that can only be as Heaven pleases,' answered the Rector; 'but I will bring them back with me, never fear.'

That, however, was precisely the thing he failed to do. Accompanied by his daughters, he returned in about an hour to the rectory, when he informed Mrs. Wright that Bella's uncle had called at the church and gone with her for a stroll by moonlight.

'I wonder if he will come here for supper,' said Selina, care on her brow and housewifely anxiety in her heart.

'I should not think so,' replied the Rector. 'He will want to catch the nine-o'clock train if he means to get back to town to-night; but, in any case, we can but give him the best we have in our larder. You may be quite sure Irwin is not the man to suspect us of want of hospitality.'

'He must be a very extraordinary man if he could do anything of the sort,' remarked Colonel Leschelles.

In return for which observation, Mrs. Wright cast upon him a grateful glance, and said softly, 'Thank you.'

Time passed on, but Miss Bella did not return. Nine o'clock came—a quarter past—half past—and still no Bella.

'I wonder where the girl can be,' marvelled Mr. Wright. 'Her uncle would never take her to London without letting us know.'

'Perhaps he is staying somewhere in the neighbourhood,' suggested Mrs. Wright.

'I think I will go up as far as the station?' said the Rector. 'The Colonel won't miss me while he is showing you the presents he has brought for the children.'

'Really, it is too bad of Mr. Irwin,' said Mrs. Wright, who had never forgiven that gentleman for not rising to the bait of re-

furnishing Bella's bedroom. 'He ought to know better than keep the girl out until this time of night.'

'We are all of us old enough to know better, Selina,' answered the Rector, taking his arm which he had just put into the sleeve of his top coat out of it again; 'and, after all, I don't see that there can be any use in my going to the station.' He must, as you say, be staying in the neighbourhood somewhere. He would never leave her to walk home alone.'

'I should be very sorry to answer for what Mr. Irwin might or might not do,' commented Mrs. Wright, seated before the drawing-room fire, and screening her face from the blaze with a great feather fan brought by an admiring *protégé* from foreign parts.

'I think I will go, too,' remarked the Rector in the hall, putting on his top-coat again.

'Ha! here they are at last,' he added delightedly, as a pattering on the gravel announced that someone was coming up the drive.

'Why, Bella, my dear,' he went on, flinging open the door and looking out incredulously into the night, 'where is your uncle? Is he not with you? Have you come home alone?'

'Oh, Mr. Wright, I hope you will not be displeased,' she began; 'but we walked farther than we intended, and he had only just time to catch the last train. He wanted to come home with me, but I did not know where he could stay for the night, and besides, he wished to go to London; so I told him I would run all the way home, but I did not; I came back slowly, and that is the reason why I am so late.'

'Gracious heavens, child! what is the matter?—what has happened?' asked Mr. Wright, noticing she could scarcely restrain

her tears, and that her face looked white and troubled. Dreadful visions of Mr. Irwin's bankruptcy, insolvency, and ruin were vouchsafed to the Bector as he led her into the drawing-room and closed the door. In imagination he read, 'A large failure is announced to-day in the City, that of Irwin and Son, die-sinkers, Eastcheap,' and dire fears assailed him of the stoppage of that bank, so lately discovered, from which he had hoped cheques would continue to flow as naturally as manna once fell from heaven.

For a minute Miss Miles, coming out of the faint moonlight into the drawing-room, which the dancing fire and many wax candles made brilliant, seemed too much blinded and frightened to speak. Then, recovering composure, and seeing two pairs of anxious eyes fixed on her, she said:

'There is nothing the matter—at least, there is, for old Mr. Irwin died yesterday. But it is not that,' she added, 'it was not that which made me foolish. Uncle and I were talking about long ago, and I could not help crying as I came home. And oh! may I go to bed, please?' she went on, addressing Mrs. Wright; 'I have a dreadful headache, and I do not want to see anybody.'

'Certainly, dear, go at once,' replied Mrs. Wright, kissing the girl with a sudden impulse of affection and pity, which caress Bella returned with interest.

'Good-night,' she said, turning to Mr. Wright, who stood by, relieved but astonished.

He opened the door for her to pass on, and laying his hand on her shoulder, answered her words by saying:

'Bless you, my child.'

Then he went back to Selina, and exclaimed twice with great solemnity:

'Poor old Mr. Irwin! dear—dear—dear!'

Meantime Miss Miles, stealing off to Mr. Wright's dressing-room, which had for the nonce been appropriated to her use, was encountered suddenly by Colonel Leschelles coming, laden with gifts, out of the blue-and-white apartment her skilful fingers had helped to embellish.

For a moment the light of the candle he carried fell full on her face, while he, standing still, made way for her to pass.

With a little timid half-curtsey and a 'Good-night, sir,' spoken, in the confusion of the moment, in French, she tripped nervously away along the passage, leaving the Colonel still standing looking after her in amazement, his candle held aloft, and his astonishment finding vent in a muttered exclamation:

'I have seen that girl before,' he thought, 'but where?'

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT MR. IRWIN CAME TO TELL.

WHEN, earlier on that same Christmas Eve, Mr. Irwin looked into Fisherton Church to ascertain if his niece were there, a very pretty sight met his eyes.

Gas had not then penetrated farther into Fisherton than the railway station, distant some mile and a half, and it was by the light of many candles that the ladies, young and old, who had undertaken the care of the decorations, were fastening up mot-toes, twining wreaths round pillars, affixing lettered banners to the walls, were, in a word, engaged in putting the old building into gala attire.

Now, there is a certain picturesqueness about candlelight, which gas emulates in vain. The

long, deep shadows—the small spaces cleared out of utter darkness—the corners filled with blackness—the changing of figures from flesh and blood to unreal phantoms as they pass from the light into the shade—the roof seen indistinctly, and looking consequently twice as lofty as it is in reality—the uncertainty as to what is hidden behind the pillars, and a sense of wonderment concerning the chancel, looking so dim and far away in the gathering gloom—all these things go to make up an interior, the secrets and fancies composing which gas sweeps ruthlessly away.

I marvel now what has become of the imaginings which childhood—in the days when Fisherton Church had to trust to the candle-maker for evening illumination—was wont to conjure up out of the old tomb to the right of the chancel, on which, under a stone canopy, lay the figure of a knight clad in complete armour, or of that other monument surrounded by praying children, and surmounted by a score of fat-cheeked cherubs bearing the body of Dame Ursula Berton, resting on rocky clouds, straight away to heaven.

When last Christmastide the present generation of young ladies assembled to put the finishing strokes to their labours, I am afraid the old church, though doing much credit to their taste and skill, lost, by reason of flaring gaslights, most of its romance.

Youth, beauty, and grace are eternal, and yet as the fashion of the settings in which we behold them vary, so may those who have had their taste moulded in days gone down many and many a year ago into the grave of time, be pardoned if the conceits of a former age seem to them more lovely than the bald framing of this.

To the end of his life Mr. Irwin, at all events, will never forget Fisherton Church as he looked into it for the first and the last time by night; never forget the sweet scent of the flowers, and the faint, unfamiliar, almost sickening, odour of the evergreens, the flitting figures of the young girls now tripping away into darkness, now posing themselves unconsciously into some picturesque attitude; whilst all the time the gloom of the pointed arches refused to receive even a gleam of light, and the ancient pillars seemed to submit themselves unwillingly to the hands of the beautifiers.

Around the font, admiring the work of her deft white fingers, stood a group of matrons and elderly ladies, who were expressing in no measured terms their admiration of Miss Miles' taste and skill.

'Not a flower or leaf but Christmas roses in the whole thing, I declare!' one voluble mother remarked, as she reluctantly moved towards the door; 'and look at it! If you had showered down stars from the firmament on a green meadow, it could not be more like life itself.'

'Do you know whether Miss Miles is engaged?' asked a gentleman standing in the shadow at this juncture, addressing the speaker who had been uttering her admiration to no one in particular.

'Lawks, sir, how you did frighten me!' remarked the worthy woman. 'I made sure it was a ghost a-speaking. Miss Miles, sir, she have just a-finished that there font, and, though I says it, as perhaps shouldn't, being Fisherton bred and born, I don't think to-morrow will see such another font in all England. Did you want Miss Miles, sir?'

'Yes; if you could say to her.

without putting yourself to inconvenience, that her uncle is here, I should feel very much obliged.'

A moment after, his niece sprang forward to where he stood.

'I am so glad—so glad to see you, uncle! I did not think you would come before the end of the week. Come and look at my work. I did it all, every bit, myself.'

'I have seen it,' he answered. 'I have been looking at it and you for the last quarter of an hour.'

'And never spoke a word to me,' she pouted.

'There were plenty to speak and say pleasant things, my dear,' he said gravely and fondly; 'and I liked to listen to your praises. It makes me so happy to think I acted wisely in bringing you here.'

'I am sure you did,' she agreed. 'I have learnt a great deal at Fisherton—more, in some ways; than I could have done in twenty years at school. You are going to the rectory, of course?'

'No,' was the reply. 'I want to have a chat with you. It is a moonlight night, if not a very bright one—not like the moonlights we remember elsewhere. Let us have a walk.'

'I will just tell the girls where I am gone, in case Mr. Wright wants me, and be with you in a moment.' And through light and shade he watched her figure flitting up the aisle, and away to the reading-desk, where the Misses Wright received her communication with the most polite indifference.

Red Indians and our upper ten thousand have, it is said, one charming trait in common—that of possessing the faculty of seeming to be surprised at and interested in nothing. If this be, as we are credibly assured it is, the perfection of good-breeding, clergymen's children must have close affinity

to the *crème de la crème* of society and barbarism.

Personally, I have no more acquaintance with braves and their squaws than I have with dukes and duchesses; but it has been my privilege to mix pretty freely with the sons and daughters of men holding rank of some sort in the Church, and I can safely say I have seldom met one who could be prevailed upon to evince a human interest in the affairs of any living being who was not directly or indirectly connected with themselves, or their papa's parish, or their papa's prospects.

This is, of course, while they remain in the parental nest. The world, fortunately, possesses a potent recipe for eliminating spiritual and social conceit out of the first-born even of a bishop; and there comes a time when the greatest prig nurtured in a rural parish becomes not merely tolerable, but agreeable in his manners.

But there is a middle passage to be encountered before this delectable land, where children born in rectories and vicarages become amenable to the laws of ordinary society, is reached, and clerical children may be met on equal terms by those destitute of ecclesiastical position.

The young Wrights were embarked on that passage, and woe to the unfortunate traveller who chanced to be in the vessel with them.

To all intents and purposes, they were ensconced in the cabin, while all the rest of their world had been only able to pay steerage fares. It is nice, this, for the clerical offspring, while it lasts; but it is nice also for the laity to remember it cannot last for ever. At first Miss Miles had writhed under the contemptuous indifference of Mr. Wright's dear children to anything except themselves and their own belongings;

but time reconciles us to most things, and Maria's coolly-uttered 'very well,' in answer to her delighted communication, did not damp her spirits in the least.

'This is lovely!' she said to her uncle, clasping both hands round his arm as they left the church. 'Only think of our having such a good time all to ourselves!'

'I am afraid you will not think it so good a time, after all,' he answered; 'for I have something unpleasant to tell you.'

Instantly the smile left her lips, and the light faded out of her eyes.

'About—about—my father?' she faltered.

'No; not about him—at least, I have news of him. He is going to the diggings.'

'Does he speak of coming home?'

'No. He says he will never come home unless he can return a rich man, which is not very likely.'

'I do not know that,' said the girl faintly.

Then ensued silence for a few minutes, which Mr. Irwin broke by saying:

'My father-in-law is dead.'

'Dead!' she repeated. 'When? What did he die of?'

'A fit of passion,' was the answer, spoken coldly, and almost sullenly. 'We had a quarrel about ten days ago, and when he was in the middle of a bitter and unjust sentence he fell back insensible; and, though he lived for over a week, he never fully recovered consciousness.'

'How horrible! What a dreadful thing for you!'

'It would have been a dreadful thing for me if he had recovered consciousness,' replied Mr. Irwin. 'He would have left me, comparatively speaking, a beggar. I wish, Bella—I wish with all my heart—I could say I felt sorry

when I saw him lying dead. Had he lived, I must have left the firm, separated from my wife—that misfortune I could have survived, however—parted, for the time at least, from my children, and begun the world all over again.'

'Why, what happened?—what could have happened?' she inquired, shivering, though she was warmly clad, and the night not particularly cold.

'I will tell you,' he answered; 'in fact, I must tell you, for our interests are identical, and, besides, it is a relief to speak out to some one. Always I have been to a certain extent in my father-in-law's power, and occasionally he made me feel the fact. Still, on the whole, we got on pretty well together. He liked keeping the reins in his own hands, but he was liberal enough in pecuniary matters; and though he never let me forget that the money was his, still he did not grudge me an ample share of it.'

He paused for a moment, and then continued:

'Some short time since we had a dispute with one of our customers about an account. He wanted, as I considered, to evade a just claim, and I was, therefore, firm about the matter—firmer than I should otherwise have been about a larger amount.'

'Yes, uncle?' said his niece inquiringly.

'At last we threatened legal proceedings, and he then sent his attorney to our office to endeavour to effect some compromise.'

'My partner left the management of the affair to me, and I rejected all offers of arrangement. After the lawyer had called two or three times his manner suddenly changed. He dared me to bring any case into court; he threatened me; he said, with a cunning insolence, for which I could have struck him, "Those

who live in glass houses should not throw stones;" and when I asked him what he meant, he said, "I thought there was something familiar to me about you, spite of your beard and your Yankee twang; but I was not sure of the matter until the other day, when I happened to meet a lady coming up the stairs, whom I remembered perfectly. Come, you had better give up your point. You won't like going into court, I know, and being asked if you ever stood in the dock yourself. Put pride in your pocket, Mr. Irwin, and prove yourself as discreet as you have been fortunate."

'And what did you do, uncle?' she asked.

'I behaved like a simpleton. I told him to do his best or his worst. I said I was more resolved than ever to insist on our rights; and then I opened the door, and remarked that if he did not leave the office at once I would kick him out of it.'

'And he?' inquired the girl.

'He laughed in my face. He said I should perhaps sing to a different tune before many days were over; and then he ran downstairs, stopping at the first landing to make a mocking bow.'

'Uncle, who was the lady?' asked Miss Miles.

'Can't you guess, my child?' he said pityingly, and then went on speaking more rapidly: 'Yes; she found me out—traced me by some means. I warned her not to come to the office. I entreated her not to ruin me as she ruined her husband. I told her I would do anything—anything that lay in my power for her welfare—if she would only keep quiet, and let me have the chance of keeping that horrid past out of sight. She promised me faithfully to keep our relationship a secret, and then, because I could not go to see her the very day she wished, came

three times to the office—three times, I assure you, in as many hours.'

'She ought not to have done it; she ought to have considered you,' murmured his niece.

'She ought. I have done all I could for her; but she is just the same as ever. If she wants a thing, she thinks the world ought to stand still while she gets it. When I remonstrated with her on her imprudence, she laughed and said:

'Nobody will notice me. No one could recognise me;' and she would not even draw down her veil.'

'Why did she want to see you so particularly?' asked the girl.

'She wanted me to find her money to go to Australia.'

'But you will not do so! Oh! don't let her go there!' entreated his companion.

'I shall come to that part of my story presently,' said Mr. Irwin. 'Let me tell you what that precious lawyer did. He went to my father-in-law, and raked up all the old story; told how I had been connected with your father; told how he was transported, and how I had been taken into custody; explained how my sister had been acquitted, though no living being could doubt her complicity; said I had been obliged to leave the country, that I was no better than a thief, and that I was still the companion of thieves, with much more to the same effect. He, it appears, had been engaged in the case, and knew all about it.

'That same evening, when all the clerks but one had gone—thank God he did not go—Mr. Irwin came up to my private office and opened fire.

'First of all, he asked me if what he had heard was true. Had my brother-in-law been a common workman—had he been taken up for theft—had he been convicted—had my sister been charged

with him—had I myself been suspected of being an accomplice. To these questions I had to answer "Yes." I tried to explain, to soften, to make the best of a bad business—all in vain. I could not alter facts; and he broke out.

'He said I had come to him in a false character—under false pretences—that I had basely betrayed the confidence he reposed in me, and repaid his kindness by inveigling his daughter into forming an attachment for a mere adventurer—a common swindler. I thought he would exhaust his vehemence at last, so finally sat silent. This he mistook for defiance. "You think, I suppose," he said, "that I cannot sever my connection with you. If there is justice in England, I will have it. You shall not say I sent you off penniless, but you shall not have a halfpenny more than I choose to give. You may smile" (I had done nothing of the sort), "but I shall prove as good as my word. I shall make my will to-night, and tie up every farthing, so that you can never riot on my hard-earned money. I shall take steps for a separation between you and my daughter. I shall——"

"You need not trouble yourself to explain your intentions further," I broke in at this juncture. "I shall never make any demand upon you in the future. I shall never see you or your daughter again." And with that I was about to leave the office, when he broke into the most frightful paroxysm of rage imaginable.

"Don't go," he shouted. "Don't dare to go. I have not half done with you. I have not said a quarter I mean to say. I will send the police after you if you——"

'I shall never know what he imagined I was going to do,'

finished Mr. Irwin, in a broken and agitated voice, 'for at that moment he made a movement, as if trying to clutch the air, and fell back in a fit.

'I ran to him, and unfastened his cravat. I shouted for Tucker to come and stay with him while I ran for a doctor. I raced through the streets like a madman, and at last procured medical assistance in the person of a young surgeon.

'When he looked at him he shook his head. "You had better not try to move him, sir," he said. "Make up a bed here and give him a chance. I should like to meet a doctor upon the case. There may be some hope, but my own impression is he will never speak again."

'We did all we could for him. The doctor came—many doctors came, but all confirmed the surgeon's opinion. Everything money could buy was bought. Everything skill could suggest was tried. His daughter came, but fainted directly, and had to be sent away again. We had two nurses, and I myself seldom left him. On the eighth day he died.

'He never spoke another conscious word. He never made the threatened will. He died intestate, as I understand from his solicitors; and if that be the case, nothing can now affect my pecuniary position; but I am afraid I shall not be able to hold up my head in the City again.

'I met that horrid lawyer to-day, and he said, with a grin, "It is better to be born lucky than rich; is it not, Mr. Walter Chappell Irwin? It is fortunate when refractory relations die just in the nick of time."

'Oh! uncle, uncle!' cried out Bella Miles, 'don't offend that man any more. Make terms with him. Do anything to make him keep quiet!'

(*To be continued.*)

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OLD HABITUÉ.

THE COMÉDIE FRANÇAISE.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, when the star of Rachel was still in the ascendant, and her genius invested the rugged majesty of Corneille and the tender elegies of Racine with a new and peculiar charm, the 'off-nights' of the Théâtre Français presented, as a general rule, a melancholy and disheartening spectacle. The audience, few in number and essentially *bourgeois* in character, consisted chiefly of the old *abonnés* in their respective stalls, keeping themselves awake by repeated applications to their snuff-boxes, and of Palais Royal and Rue Saint-Honoré tradesmen, who, with their wives and daughters, thinly peopled the balcony and upper boxes. The actors played listlessly and mechanically, the *claqueurs* applauded drowsily, and not unfrequently at the wrong moment, and the treasurer, contemptuously regarding the miserable pittance taken at the doors, brightened up as he thought of the next evening's overflowing receipts, when 'Phèdre' or 'Les Horaces' should once more recall the truant public, and he himself, a second Tom Tiddler, should be pleasantly occupied in 'counting out gold and silver.'

These were, in truth, evil days for a national theatre, when its prosperity depended on the powers of attraction—not to mention the caprices—of one artist, even though that artist were the inimitable 'Camille.' For, ready as that inconstant dame Fashion may be to adopt new devices, she is by no means equally prone to reinstate in her good graces once discarded favourites; so that, for many a long year, the Théâtre Français remained a desert four

nights at least in the week, on which occasions, ironically denominated 'les lendemains de Mdlle. Rachel,' the money-taker's office dwindled to almost a sinecure, and even free admissions went a begging.

After a while, however, people began to remember that certain individuals called Molière, Regnard, and Beaumarchais had in their day written some very tolerable comedies, and that Samson, Regnier, and Augustine Brohan could represent these comedies tolerably well; nay, some went so far as to hint that Scribe and Dumas might occasionally be seen with pleasure, and that Alfred de Musset was not altogether 'flat, stale, and unprofitable.' A very little suffices to make a mickle; 'les moutons de Panurge' are as abundant in the nineteenth century as they were in the days of Rabelais; and, little by little, the Comédie Française recovered its ancient prestige, and became what it now is, and ought ever to have been, the rendezvous of the best society, the popular and unrivalled temple of the national drama.

* * * *

It is rather tantalising to glance at the bygone records of this theatre, every page of which recalls some illustrious name, some imperishable work of art, and to feel that the limits I have assigned to these papers forbid even a cursory allusion to them. It is hard to pass over unnoticed Adrienne Lecouvreur, Lekain, Clairon, Prévile, and I was about to add Talma, when I bethought me of a little anecdote related by Madame de Girardin, which will serve to wind up these prefatory remarks, and

enable me to plunge in *medias res* with an easier conscience. During a discussion in a literary *soirée* as to the respective merits of Talma and Lafon, the company, with one exception, opined in favour of the former, while their solitary opponent argued as strenuously in behalf of the latter, and concluded by asserting that Talma was very much overrated. 'Then,' cried one of his adversaries, 'you can't have seen him in Orestes.' 'No more I have.' 'Nor in Hamlet,' exclaimed another. 'Nor in Hamlet either.' 'Then, in what did you see him?' said a third. 'Well,' replied the partisan of Lafon, with a triumphant smile, 'I saw him in a hackney coach, and thought nothing of him.'

* * * * *

Sixteen years previous to my arrival in Paris, the modern Roscius had been consigned to his last home in Père-la-Chaise; but two of his most renowned contemporaries still survived, and both of these I had more than one opportunity of seeing; I allude to Mdlle. Georges and Mdlle. Mars. Mdlle. Georges, the once beautiful rival of Mdlle. Duchesnois, the favourite of emperors and kings, and subsequently the terrible representative of Marguerite de Bourgogne and Lucrèce Borgia, had long since retired from the stage; but, owing to the extreme modicity of her resources, was compelled occasionally to solicit a benefit either at the Comédie Française or at a minor theatre. The chief attraction of these performances, the effect of which was heightened by the co-operation of the principal artists of the capital, was, naturally, the *beneficiaire* herself; and I well remember the strange feeling of interest and curiosity with which I awaited the rise of the curtain one evening at the Vaudeville, preparatory to her

appearance in the second act of 'Athalie.' She was then very infirm and enormously corpulent; but her eyes still flashed fire as of yore, and her voice, though at times tremulous from age, had lost but little of its original sonority. The delivery of the famous dream was horribly impressive, and in her interrogatory of Joas there was a latent subtlety of malice, both as regards intonation and facial expression, of which no description can convey the faintest idea. Some years later, I saw her at the Théâtre Français, in 'Rodogune,' and came to the conclusion that the modern school of French tragedy, with its cold correctness and measured declamation, can only be redeemed from utter insignificance by the genius of its interpreters, and that the traditional points and pauses so sedulously inculcated by Conservatoire professors are but sorry substitutes for the impulsive earnestness of a Georges, or the untutored energy of a Rachel.

My personal recollections of Mdlle. Mars are limited to two or three short pieces of her *répertoire*, comprising, among others, 'Le Manteau,' one of Andrieux's pleasantest and most ingenious productions. She was then nearly at the close of her long and glorious career, and still retained many of the peculiar qualities to which she owed the flattering title of 'the diamond of the Théâtre Français.' Her voice was the sweetest and most melodious I ever heard on the stage, and her accentuation so marvellously distinct that not a syllable she uttered escaped the ear. Her acting, if such perfect grace of look, tone, and manner could be called acting, was that of a well-bred lady in her drawing-room, free from the slightest tinge of conventionality, and stamped with that real elegance *de bonne*

compagnie so rarely met with even in the highest rank, and which, if not innate, can never be acquired. Alas! I little thought, while spell-bound beneath the charm exercised by this gifted creature over all who saw or heard her, that I should shortly after, a voluntary mourner, form one of the melancholy procession whose sad office it was, on March 26th, 1847, to escort her remains to their final resting-place in Père-la-Chaise.

Among the many tributes of sorrow called forth on this occasion, perhaps the most touching, from its simplicity, was the following *couplet*, referring to some alterations and embellishments recently completed at the Théâtre Français, and sung—who would have supposed it?—some months later in a *revue* of the Palais Royal:—

‘ Dans cette salle où maintenant l’or
brille,
Thalie en pleurs cherche dans son cha-
grin,
Cherche un *seur* qui manque à sa fa-
mille,
Un diamant qui manque à son *écrin*!
Mars n’est plus là, pour nous donner
l’exemple,
Et le public se dit, tout attristé,
“ Qu’importe, hélas! qu’on ait doré le
temple,
S’il est privé de sa divinité!” ’

It would appear that the atmosphere of the Comédie Française, like the fountain of Jouvence, possesses some especial time-defying properties, if we may judge from the perpetual youthfulness of some of its members. At the same period when I first saw Mdlle. Mars, Mdlle. Plessy was playing *Valérie* and *La Camaraderie*; and now, thirty years later, we find her still at her post, as supremely attractive in her favourite *Marivaux* as in the last new *proverbe* of Octave Feuillet, as coquettishly *mignarde* and silvery-toned as ever. Another

example of eternal juvenility was Mdlle. Anais, who, when past fifty, not only acted, but looked the *ingénues* to the life, thereby justifying the remark of a celebrated critic, that ‘the Graces have no age, and Mdlle. Anais is one of the family.’

When Alfred de Vigny first produced his fine play of ‘*Chatterton*,’ the part of Kitty Bell was justly considered one of the greatest triumphs of Madame Dorval, for whom it had been expressly written. On a subsequent revival of the piece, posterior to the death of that celebrated actress, the incompetency of her successor entirely paralysed the general effect, and, after a few tame and ill-attended performances, one of the best productions of the romantic school disappeared, probably for ever, from the *répertoire*. I was well acquainted with its author, and frequently visited him in his apartment in the Rue des Ecuries d’Artois. His wife was English, and every Wednesday a chosen circle of friends assembled in his little *salon*, where literary conversation was the order of the day. Alfred de Vigny was about the middle height, with small but piercing eyes, long, flowing hair, and a noble forehead, the very *beau idéal* of a poet. His manner had all the courteous politeness of the ancient *régime*, mingled with an affable *bonhomie* peculiar to himself. Occasionally he would read aloud to us some of his latest poems, but soon abandoned them for his idolized Lamartine; and I count among my most cherished ‘pleasures of memory’ the privilege of having heard the melodious verse of ‘Jocelyn’ from the lips of the author of ‘*Cinq Mars*.’

A very necessary, though hardly sufficiently appreciated, appendage

to a theatre is a good 'old woman,' and this indispensable requisite, where Molière and Marivaux are concerned, is by no means easily met with. She must combine dignity of manner with a strong perception of the ludicrous; she must have tact enough to discriminate between the peculiarities of Madame Pernelle and those of Madame Argante, never descending to triviality, and yet always amusing. Such a *dugne* (the best I ever saw after our own incomparable Mrs. Glover) was Madame Desmousseaux; and one of her most successful personations was Madame d'Aigueperse, in 'Le Mari à la Campagne.' The mention of this excellent comedy naturally brings me to its principal interpreter, and here, like Sir Colley Cowmeadow, in 'Master's Rival,' 'I want words to express myself.'

For what can I say of Regnier, the thorough and genuine artist, the accomplished scholar and gentleman, the friend of Dickens and Forster, and, I am proud to add, my own, that has not been repeated and endorsed by every admirer of his universally sympathetic talent? If ever a dramatic Proteus existed, it was Regnier, combining the raciest humour, the keenest wit, with the simplest and most heart-moving pathos (who can forget his Noel, in 'La Joie fait peur,' and Michonnet, in 'Adrienne Lecouvreur'!), passing 'from grave to gay, from lively to severe' as easily as he exchanged the fantastic livery of Scapin for the dainty vest and silver-fringed buttons of Figaro. No part was too small, too insignificant for him. His anxiety to ensure an irreproachable *ensemble* was such that I have known him undertake the trifling character of the valet Dubois, in the 'Misanthrope,' and in his one solitary scene fairly throw the superb Alceste himself into the

shade. He was, in fact, the life and soul of his theatre, devoting to its interests every hour of his time, every faculty of his intelligence, seeking no other reward for his labours than the honest consciousness of having done his duty, and thereby earning for himself, on finally closing his long and arduous career, the right of saying, as a parting hint to his successors—

'Ich habe
Das meinige gethan. Thun Sie das Ihre.'

* * * * *

'Le Mari à la Campagne' reminds me of a bright, sunny little creature, whose youth and beauty were charmingly attractive in this piece and many others, and who rejoiced in the pretty patronimic of Aimée Doze. She afterwards married Roger de Beauvoir, author of 'Le Chevalier de St. Georges,' and, turning her own thoughts to literature, produced a volume, entitled 'Les Confidences de Mdlle. Mars.' Why she gave it that name it is hard to say; for its pages, though pleasant and gossip, contain but scant mention of the great actress; and it was remarked by a contemporary critic, that the only reproach he felt inclined to address to the writer was that she had kept the 'confidences' to herself, and left out Mdlle. Mars altogether.

* * * * *

I was present at the farewell benefits of Périer, Firmin, and Menjaud, three of the most popular members of this theatre under the Bourbon dynasty, and briefly subjoin my recollections of each. Périer was a consummate comedian of the old school, somewhat formal and antiquated in manner, but abounding in dry humour and epigrammatic point; Firmin, on the contrary, retained to the last that impassioned energy which

had served him so well in 'Henri III. et sa Cour'; and though short in stature, was neither wanting in dignity nor grace. As for Menjaud, he was one of the best level speakers I ever heard; his Clitandre, in 'Les Femmes Savantes,' was a perfect study, whether as regards the courtly ease of his manner, or the exquisite modulation of his delivery. But his *cheval de bataille*, on the whole, was 'Le Verre d'Eau,' in which quasi-historical but most entertaining comedy, Scribe himself, however punctilious and exacting he may have been, could scarcely have desired, or even imagined, a more elegant Bolingbroke than Menjaud, or a more imposing Duchess of Marlborough than Mdlle. Mante.

Many years ago, looking over some Brussels newspapers, I came to the following comparison, which struck me as peculiarly happy. 'Bouffé, c'est le talent poussé à la dernière limite; Mdlle. Rachel commence où s'arrête Bouffe-au génie.' There, in one short sentence, is the real history of this extraordinary woman, the key to all her triumphs, the secret of that magnetic influence which few essayed to dispute and none could resist. From that eventful 1st of May, 1837, when, unknown and almost uneducated, she startled the public of the Gymnase by her strangely effective and unconventional conception of 'La Vendéenne,' to the last moments of her brilliant career, her qualities, nay, her very defects, bore that genuine impress of originality which constituted her greatest and most enduring charm. The former may have been perfected, the latter modified, by professional training, but Samson and Michelot could do no more, nor was more required of

them; the rest was in nature's hands, and they did well to leave it there.

Enough has been said, even in these pages, of Mdlle. Rachel, to render no further appreciation of her merits necessary. Those who have not seen her can barely glean from mere second-hand information a faint idea of what she was, and those who have will at once recognise how far even the most graphic description falls short of the reality. Let me, however, recommend to any who wish to know the *dernier mot* on the subject the elaborate and eloquent book of Jules Janin, entitled 'Rachel et la Tragédie,' a goodly volume, rich in poetical illustration, and written in that pleasant and sparkling style of which my lamented friend alone had the secret.

Off the stage, Rachel was lively, unaffected, and sociable; she had a keen sense of the humorous, and, like Talma, whose greatest ambition was to rival Brunet as Jocrisse, fancied that her peculiar *forte* lay in comedy, and, notwithstanding her comparative failure as Marinette and Célimène, persisted in asserting that she was right and the public wrong.

'She was the strangest creature I ever met with,' said once to me the Duc de —. 'I was in her *salon* the other evening, when two or three academicians came to pay her a visit. She received them with her most majestic air, and after a long conversation on literary and scientific topics, which she discussed with a gravity and *aplomb* worthy of Mdlle. de Soudéry, they took their leave. No sooner were they gone than she started from her chair, and began whirling about the room like a second St. Vitus, till she was fairly out of breath, when she sat down on the hearth-rug,

and devoured a plateful of brandy cherries. But that's nothing,' added he, 'compared to what happened not long ago at the theatre. She was electrifying the house in "*Phèdre*," and though I have seen her in it a dozen times, her scene with Hippolyte is so magnificent that I can never listen to it unmoved. At the end of the act I was talking to a friend in the lobby, when a note from her was given to me, simply two lines in pencil, saying that she felt exhausted, and requesting me on my way to the club to order something for her at Chevet's; and what do you think it was?' 'Perhaps Ostend oysters or a *perdreau aux truffes*,' said I. 'Not a bit of it, *mon cher*,' replied the Duc de —, 'Pickled salmon and *fromage de Chester*!'

Among the last creations of Mdlle. Rachel was *Rosemonde*, in the one-act tragedy, or rather drama so called, a production coldly received by the public and indifferently played by the actress, who was already suffering from the malady which eventually proved fatal to her. The final performance was so thinly attended, and the heroine herself so pale and wan as to suggest the following lines:

'Pourquoi nomme-t-on cette pièce Rosemonde?

Je n'y vois pas de rose, je n'y vois pas de monde!'

The other members of the Félix family, Raphaël, Sara, Rebecca, Lia, and Dinah, have, without exception, successively tried their fortune on the stage. Of these, Rebecca, who died in 1854, at the early age of twenty-five, was the most promising; Mdlle. Lia Félix still enjoys a certain reputation as a boulevard actress, and her younger sister, Dinah, since the retirement of Augustine Brohan and Mdlle. Bonval, has become

one of the leading *soubrettes* of the Comédie Française.

The three male representatives of tragedy during the reign of Mdlle. Rachel were Ligier, Beauvallet, and Guyon; the first will be remembered for his masterly personation of Louis XI., and his subsequent performance of Victor Séjour's '*Richard III.*' at the Porte St. Martin. In this latter piece, however, he was no longer the Ligier of Casimir Delavigne, but a fervent disciple of the ranting and roaring school, and blustered and bellowed so indefatigably as to cause a half-deafened spectator to exclaim: 'Il a dix louis par soirée, et il crie pour vingt-cinq!'

It is no pleasant task for an actor of sterling talent to play night after night second fiddle to a popular star, and to content himself with a small percentage of the applause so liberally bestowed on his more favoured partner. Beauvallet deserved better treatment than this, and eventually obtained it; by dint of energy and perseverance he triumphed over the indifference of press and public, and forced even the most fanatical worshippers of Rachel to admit that the tragedies of Corneille are anything but a monologue, and that Rodrigue and Horace are as necessary to their satisfactory interpretation as Chimène and Camille.

I cannot say as much for Guyon, nor for Madame Mélingue, both importations from the Ambigu, and artists of unquestionable ability, but wholly unsuited to the Théâtre Français. Accustomed to the declamatory prose of Bouchardy and Anicet Bourgeois, and the feverish transports of a boulevard audience, unwilling or unable to imitate the classical sobriety

of tone and gesture of their new associates, and chilled by the comparative apathy of the critical *habitués*, they gradually lost confidence in their own powers, thereby verifying when too late the old saying,

'Tel brille au second rang qui s'éclipse au premier.'

* * * * *

If Melpomene, at least as far as her heroine was concerned, proudly held her own against all comers, Thalia was worthily and effectively represented by Samson and Provost. The former, author of the well-known comedies, 'La Belle Mère et le Gendre,' and 'La Famille Poisson,' and one of the founders of that noble institution, the Dramatic Artists' Association, had little in common with his illustrious namesake, his object being the preservation, not the destruction, of the temple, of which he himself was one of the soundest and most essential pillars. Despite the natural defects of a sharp, grating voice and a nasal twang, he not only delighted the multitude by the dry pun-gency of his humour, but gratified the connoisseur by the delicate finish of his style; his versatility was as conspicuous in the ancient as in the modern *répertoire*, and it would be hard to say whether his talent appeared to more advantage in Sganarelle or Quexada, in Monsieur Jourdain or the Marquis de la Seiglière.

Provost had neither the brilliant impetuosity of Regnier, nor the ease and polished sarcasm of Samson; but he was not the less an admirable comedian. The epithet usually applied to his acting was 'magistral,' nor could any more appropriate term have been found to designate its particular merit. He had perhaps less influence over the masses than his two

fellow-artists, but there was a depth of observation in his conception of a character, and a frank dignity in his general bearing, that, added to his impressive and excellent delivery, rendered his performance of what are technically called 'les manteaux,' not merely a rich intellectual treat, but a most enjoyable and profitable study. In private life, Provost was as majestic, as stately, in a word, as 'magistral,' as on the stage; there was a gravity in his demeanour, and in his very walk during his afternoon stroll in the garden of the Palais Royal, which instinctively reminded one of Arnolphe in the 'Ecole des Femmes'; and I fancy I see him now, beguiling the tedium of an *entr'acte* with his favourite game of chess, and solemnly pondering over a hazardous move at one of the tables in the *foyer*.

It is time, by-the-by, to introduce the reader to that commodious and aristocratic sanctum of the ordinary comedians of his Majesty—no matter who; a locality bearing but scant resemblance to anything we have witnessed in our peregrinations through the minor Parisian theatres. A *huissier*, his neck encircled with a silver chain, stands at the door, and inclines his head as we enter. We find ourselves in a spacious and lofty apartment, the walls of which are decorated with portraits of the most illustrious ornaments of the Comédie Française; a smaller room adjoining being devoted to similar reminiscences of the authors. There is a quiet repose about the place, and a genial though slightly ceremonious politeness in the manner and conversation of the *habitués*, that recall the traditional elegance of the eighteenth century, and we almost imagine ourselves transported to

the days when the gallant Fleury, with that exquisite courtesy for which he was so celebrated, gracefully handed Mdlle. Contat to the stage, and awaited the termination of her scene to escort her back to the *foyer*. We take advantage of the prevailing stillness to examine the pictorial treasures at our leisure, and one of the first to attract our attention is a charming portrait of Mdlle. Lange, that fascinating siren destined henceforth to be associated in our memories with M. Lecocq and his melodious 'Fille de Madame Angot.'

I think it is Arsène Houssaye who relates an anecdote of her which is worth preserving. She was in the full splendour of her beauty, and at the zenith of her dramatic reputation, when a young man, newly arrived in Paris from Brussels, fell desperately in love with her, and despatched an eloquent missive to his father, who appears to have been at once banker and coach-builder, imploring his consent to their union. M. Simons, for such was his name, alarmed at the prospect of having an actress for daughter-in-law, did what most fathers would have done under the circumstances; he left his bank and carriages to take care of themselves, and started for Paris as rapidly as post-horses would carry him. On his arrival he found the lovers together, and, struck with the lady's charms, felt almost inclined to pardon the misdemeanour of M. Simons, junior; when the trio were suddenly startled by the abrupt entrance of the fair damsel's inseparable friend and companion, likewise a *pensionnaire* of the Théâtre Français, Mdlle. Julie Candaille. Love at first sight, apparently, is not such a myth as some people would have us believe; for, strange as it may seem,

before another hour had elapsed, M. Simons the elder (who was luckily a widower) not only consented to his son's marriage with Mdlle. Lange, but himself proposed to and was accepted by Mdlle. Candaille!

One of the principal modern ornaments of the *foyer* is a large painting by Geffroy, the eminent comedian and original creator of Marat in Ponsard's 'Charlotte Corday,' representing the leading members of the company; the numerous personages are grouped with taste and effect, and the likenesses are for the most part striking, especially those of Monrose, Firmin, and Mdlle. Mars.

The mention of 'Charlotte Corday' reminds one of the actress who, on Mdlle. Rachel's refusal to play the heroine, boldly stepped forward to undertake the part, and failed signally therein. When I first saw Mdlle. Judith, she was a promising young *débutante* at the 'Folies Dramatiques,' black-eyed, cherry-lipped, in short, remarkably handsome, and especially attractive in a piece called 'Les Premières Amours du Diable.' From thence to the Variétés was a mere step, but in the right direction, and we find her soon after soliciting and obtaining the desired *entrée* to the Rue Richelieu. Once there, she did her best to improve her position, and, taking for her motto, 'qui ne risque rien n'a rien,' or, in other words, 'nothing venture nothing have,' grasped only too eagerly the straw held out to her, and, less fortunate than Sadak, sank together with M. Ponsard's tragedy in the waters of oblivion.

Mdlle. Judith had the reputation of being both satirical and charitable. I do not guarantee the exactness of what follows, but 'tell the tale as it was told to me.' Some act of liberality on her part

having come to the ear of one of her admirers, he warmly commended her for it, and slyly added that no one would accuse Mdlle. Rachel of anything similar: to which her reply is reported to have been: 'C'est possible, car moi je suis Juive, tandis que Rachel est Juif.'

The name of Brohan in dramatic circles has long been synonymous with wit, piquancy, and grace; the mother, Madame Suzanne Brohan, although restricted in her day to the narrow arena of a vaudeville theatre, still retains a cherished place in the memory of old playgoers as a type of elegance and *finesse*; and no one who has seen Augustine and Madeleine will, I think, dispute their claim to hereditary distinction. The latter—for I cannot part with Augustine just yet—is, with the exception of Madame Plessy, the sole remaining representative of the traditional *grande coquette*. The years which have elapsed since she first trod the stage in 'Les Contes de la Reine de Navarre' have refined and matured her talent, and endowed her with that ease and self-possession which experience and incessant study alone can give. She may not quite realise our ideal of Elmire and Célimène; those wonderful conceptions of the *grand siècle* may still be beyond her grasp; but she has more strings than one to her bow, and if she occasionally disappoints us in Molière, makes ample amends for it by invariably enchanting us in Alfred de Musset.

Her sister was, or is—for, though ostensibly on the retired list, she has never, to my knowledge, formally taken leave of the theatre—

the very best *soubrette* that I remember having seen, or even heard of, at least in the present century. Respecting Madeleine Béjart and Mdlle. Beauval, the original creators of Marinette and Nicole, we have little reliable information; Mdlle. Dangeville and (in her one character of Suzanne) Mdlle. Contat may have equalled, perhaps surpassed her; but, setting these aside, I do not believe that the Comédie Française has possessed, in this particular line, an actress in any way comparable to Augustine Brohan as a *servante* of Molière or a *soubrette* of Marivaux (for they must not be confounded); as the Suzanne of Beaumarchais, or the Madame de Prie of Alexandre Dumas she stands alone; her extraordinary versatility combines every quality necessary to the efficient interpretation of the most opposite individualities; so that each successive assumption, 'de plus fort en plus fort, comme chez Nicolet,' appears to the delighted spectator more faultless, more nearly perfect than its predecessor. The most pointed wit, the sauciest humour, the most infectious gaiety, the archest and most bewitching coquetry, every natural or acquired attribute that can charm and fascinate the enraptured listener, she has them all at her finger's end, in every twinkle of her eye, in every pout of her lip, in every echo of her merry laugh! She can write, ay, and has done so more than once, as pretty a *proverbe* as Octave Feuillet himself; her *bons mots* would fill a volume; and in repartee—I was about to say she is matchless—but of that, gentle reader, you shall judge for yourself.

One evening she was sitting in the *foyer*, recruiting herself with a cup of *consommé*, and surrounded, as usual, by a levee of admirers, among whom was Des-

* According to M. Georges d'Heilly, her retirement took place in 1868.

noyers, then stage-manager of the Théâtre Français. 'Augustine,' said he, 'you have always an answer for everything, but I intend to puzzle you. I will give you a sentence, in which I will introduce the name of a town. You are to reply in one word, which must not only be *à propos* to what I say, but must also signify a city or town, in France or out of it. I am not particular. Ça va-t-il ?'

'Ça va,' said the actress.

'Bien,' pursued the *régisseur*. 'Commençons. Il paraît que tu aimes le bouillon ?'

'Elbeuf' (et l'œuf), replied Augustine, without moving a muscle.

'Bravo!' cried the delighted circle.

Desnoyers looked rather crest-fallen, but, recovering himself, continued in a pathetic tone, 'Si tu me joues de ces *tours-là*, j'en mourrai!'

This time Augustine rose from her seat, stared him full in the face, and exclaimed with perfectly annihilating emphasis, 'Péris, gueux!' (Périgueux)!

* * * *

When Alfred de Musset's charming 'Caprice' was first produced on the stage, the part of Madame de Léry found an inimitable representative in Madame Allan. This talented artist, whose name, like Boileau's, was Despréaux, had been for some years the mainstay of the French theatre at St. Petersburg, and had only recently returned to her native country. She was neither young nor pretty, and had an ultra-provincial taste in dress which would have driven Worth and Madame Ode into fits; but there was such a quiet elegance and ladylike assurance in her address and manner that the most hypercritical of her female spectators — incredible though it

may seem — actually forgot her barbaric assortment of colours in their enjoyment of her graceful and sympathetic acting. She subsequently played Madame Des Aubiers in 'La Joie Fait Peur' with an impressive pathos and a mute eloquence of look and gesture far beyond the reach of her ablest successors, even including Madame Vestris, with whom it was a favourite part. In the hands of the present possessor, Madame Guyon, the afflicted mother has become a mere prosaic *bourgeoise*, exciting compassion simply on account of her supposed bereavement, but no longer invested with that all-absorbing interest which the genius of Madame Allan rendered so inexpressibly touching.

Certainly the post of *sociétaire* at the Théâtre Français, assuring as it does a fair share of the profits and a comfortable retiring pension, is a remarkably snug berth; but when I look back to bygone days, and contrast Emilie Guyon's boulevard popularity with the steady, jog-trot respectability of her position in 1874, the 'otium cum dignitate' of the latter loses much of its prestige, and, in her case at least, only needs a distinctive badge to complete its identification with the 'Invalides.'

* * * *

We were talking just now of Alfred de Musset; but where would he be, dramatically speaking, without Delaunay? The charm of 'Les Caprices de Marianne' and 'On ne Badine pas avec l'Amour' lies as much in the interpretation as in the exquisite beauty of the language. These delicate love-poems, so seductive to the imagination of a reader, are only possible on the stage when their ideal personages are embodied by actors physically and intellectually capable of appreciating and

imparting to those around them each delicate touch, each graceful fancy; and such an actor is Delaunay. A *jeune premier* of his stamp is as rare as a tenor like Mario. No theatre, from the Comédie Française down to the smallest nomadic company exhibiting in a barn, is without its young lover; and if the quality were only proportionate to the quantity, one more or less would be no very serious consideration; but, as things are, I confess that I regard the eventual retirement of Delaunay as an irreparable artistic calamity, and shudder at the thought of a *Perdican* fashioned by some aspiring laureate after the traditions of the Conservatoire!

* * * * *

It is, I believe, an undeniable truth that a pretty face is always welcome; therefore, according to Cocker, three pretty faces must be trebly acceptable; and this may in some degree account for the rapid advance made in public favour by Mdlles. Fix, Dubois, and Favart. It would be unfair, however, to attribute their success solely to their good looks; nor would either of them have been justified in warbling 'My face is my fortune,' for a more accomplished trio in one theatre and at the same time I have never beheld. Mdlle. Delphine Fix, the most attractive of the three, was a dark-eyed, daintily-shaped Jewess, with the brightest of smiles and a soft, musical voice—in a word, a very captivating little creature to look at or to listen to. The peculiar feature of her acting was its simplicity; her *ingénues* were modest, unaffected, and natural; and if Beaumarchais had seen her play Chérubin, he would probably have modified, if not altogether forgotten, his ancient enthusiasm for Mdlle. Olivier. The last time

I ever saw this really charming actress, shortly before her death, was in 'Le Bonhomme Jadis,' a delicious one-act gem by Henry Mürger; the two remaining personages were represented by Provost and Delaunay; and, tax my memory as I will, I do not remember in the whole course of my theatrical experience having witnessed a more admirable *ensemble*.

That blonde and blue-eyed fairy, Mdlle. Emilie Dubois, when I first knew her, was extremely young, and appeared even younger than she actually was, owing to her child-like face and infantine voice. Her features were small and delicate, and she was a 'winsome wee thing.' Her Antoinette in Léon Laya's clever comedy, 'Les Jeunes Gens,' one of her earliest and best attempts, enchanted the audience, and so gratified the author that, in his preface to the published play, after a flattering mention of the *dramatis personæ*, he reserved her name until the last; not, as he says, on account of her being the youngest, but in order that so graceful and charming a *souvenir* might ever remain fresh in his memory.

I am no partisan of the solitary star system lately introduced by the managers of the French theatre in London, considering it as detrimental to the artists engaged as it undoubtedly is to the regular company. The former, accustomed to the perfection of a Parisian *ensemble*, and to the absence of all prohibitions or curtailments of their *répertoire*, not only find themselves paralysed by the unavoidable incompetency of their supporters, but, from the limited range of authorised characters, are compelled, as in the case of Mdlle. Favart, to appear in parts wholly unsuited to them: the latter, doomed by turns to co-operate in comedy, vaudeville, farce, and even drama,

become, necessarily, 'Jacks of all trades, and masters of none.' The selection of 'Le Sphinx' as the rôle de début of Mdlle. Favart was, if not financially, at any rate artistically, a fatal mistake; five and twenty years' hard work at the Comédie Française ought to have been taken into account before risking her well-earned reputation in a needless and unprofitable venture. Had she been allowed to play 'Le Supplice d'une Femme,' in which her touching pathos and sterling dramatic qualities are so truly and deservedly effective, the result might have been different; as it is, her recent engagement at the Princess's Theatre can only be classed with the other two decided failures of the year—those of Madame Marie Laurent and Madame Pasca.

I am aware that no rule is without its exception, and that the cordial and hearty welcome lately accorded to Got may be quoted against me; but one swallow makes no summer, and I do not knock under for 'a' that.' A comedian of his value, unrivalled since the retirement of Regnier, like Guzman, 'ne connaît pas d'obstacles;' nor, indeed, had he any unusual ones to encounter; Mercadet and M. Poirier having nothing to fear from censorial susceptibility, and the 'stock' actors (to their credit be it spoken) proving tolerably equal to the occasion. Besides, when Got is on the stage, no one has eyes or ears but for him; every word, every look, even the slightest particle of his marvellous by-play, is worth noting and remembering; we feel ourselves at once in the presence of a master-spirit possessing all the secrets of his art, and lavishing on us the rare treasures of wit, humour, and thoughtful observation with which

his own intelligence and a profound study of human nature have so richly endowed him. I have had by me for years an interesting memorial of this great artist, in the shape of a 'pensée fugitive,' probably long since forgotten by the writer, but carefully preserved and cherished by its grateful recipient. Its brevity will not weary my readers, and, if I mistake not, its modesty will charm them; so, 'faith, I'll print it.'

'Nous autres comédiens—n'avons à nous que le moment qui passe, et ne vivons un temps que pour l'oreille et les yeux.'

'EDMOND GOT.'

'Février, 1853.'

It is something for the Théâtre Français to have in reserve for possible contingencies a worthy successor to Got in the person of Coquelin, a young actor of whom it may be truly said that 'Ses premiers essais furent des coups de maître.' A livelier Figaro, a wittier Scapin, a more jovial Gros-René could not be desired; and those who have heard him recite 'La Grève des Forgerons' will acquit him of any want of intense dramatic feeling and sensibility. His brother, Coquelin cadet, is likewise a member of the company, but of minor note; wherefore we will respect his incognito, bearing in mind the advice of a worldly dowager (was it not Lady Cork?) to a youthful débutante: 'Tant qu'il y aura des aînés, ma chère, ne faites jamais attention aux cadets' (pronounced, if report belie not her ladyship, *caddies*).

A few words must suffice to square accounts with the remainder of the troupe, Bressant, Febvre, and Mdlle. Nathalie having been mentioned elsewhere. It is, I own, discourteous and unjust

to pass over unnoticed such time-honoured veterans as Maubant, Talbot, and Kime, and such fascinating recruits as Mdlle. Sara Bernhardt, Mdlle. Lloyd, and the fair-haired Mdlle. Reichemberg; but I have metal more attractive in prospect. Like the Wandering Jew, and Mynheer von Clam, the gentleman with the cork leg, I am hurried on in spite of myself. Mdlle. Croizette beckons, and I must perforce obey. 'À tout Sphinx tout honneur!'

When this very prepossessing young lady first appeared as Queen Anne, in 'Le Verre d'Eau' (by-the-by, why *will* Bolingbroke and every one else invariably convert Masham into *Messem*?), one could see at a glance, by the excellence of her delivery and the quiet ease of her manner, that

she was a pupil of Regnier. The part is an arduous stumbling-block for a beginner, requiring great self-possession and sobriety of style; but before the conclusion of the second act she had secured and monopolised the attention of her audience, and the rest was all plain sailing. Since then her progress has been uncontested and unchecked; her recent triumph in sensational effect has opened to her versatile talent a new field for its display; and should any doubt arise as to the degree of future eminence to which she is likely to attain, we have only to look at her bright and intelligent countenance; and, Sphinx though she be, I scarcely think that an *Œdipus* will be needed to solve the riddle!

C. H.



GHENT AND THE BÉGUINAGE.

IN the old times, which seem now a golden age, before the Franco-German war had burst, tempest-like, over the gayest land in Europe, the notion that some monument of antiquity, hoary with age and venerable associations, had passed out of the order of the things that are—had succumbed to the relentless hand of time, or fallen a victim to an unexpected disaster, hurricane or flame, was altogether an unusual and strange sensation. We read of smoking villages, of ruined castles, and sacked cities only in our history books, and, like good boys, blessed our stars, or other ruling providence, that we lived in better times. That shells should threaten the towers and domes of a great capital not a day's journey from our own homes hardly entered into the range of possibilities; at least with such men of peace as are not diplomatically inspired, and cannot read the stars of political intrigue. We read our Reuter over our morning tea and toast, innocent of such terrors. Only the enthusiastic and the artistic, the men with an eye for the picturesque, and a heart for the sentimental or a soul for the sublime—or, better still, a retentive memory and a note-book for all three—told you, with bated breath and in despairing accents, that the parochial authorities of Little Pedlington had voted the removal of the ancient parochial pump, which he called a 'conduit,' and about which he had read a paper at the local Archaeological Society, and anent which he had written several letters to 'Notes and Queries.' In vain he pleaded the interest attaching to the venerable relic; in vain he drew attention to its curious and

instructive history, and the legends connected with it. After all, it went, and more tears were shed over that act of vandalism than drops of water had fallen from its battered old leaden spout for many long years gone.

Just now I spoke of Paris. Well, over there, where the sun seems to be always shining, and the fountains playing, and the little children frisk and gambol in the gay Tuileries gardens, as if no great, ugly, scorched ruin were frowning down on them, and yet where more silly and wicked things are done in a week—and forgotten—than a century of anarchy and misrule could produce elsewhere, there are ugly gaps in the long, stately lines of buildings now. But in the old days of the Second Empire, when Haussman was king, it really needed but the magical word 'Improvements,' and whole streets and quarters were spirited away. Think of that grand Rue de Rivoli clearing away in its course, like a great shining river, all those purlieus which arrested its progress where you reach St. Antoine! The Paris of our sires, and of their fathers before them, the Paris of Eugène Sue and Gavarni, the Paris of the Barricades was vanishing. The dens and rookeries were melting away like the realms of darkness before the palace of the good fairy in the pantomime. There were to be no more street rows, no more driving the people back by grapeshot and bayonet, no more barricades. Paris was to 'give up sack, and live cleanly;' and her citizens were to rejoice in a state of things wherein, to use the neat expression of Policeman X, 'there ain't no Coo-de-tars.'

Such for the nonce was the programme of King Haussman, and one trembled to think whither his inevitable boulevard would next direct its course. Should we learn next day that there was to be a 'Boulevard du Cité,' and that when next we went on our Continental trip we should look in vain for the glittering *girouette* of the Ste. Chapelle, and find the venerable cathedral replaced by a 'square,' appropriately named 'du Métropole'?

At home we manage much the same. Apropos of 'squares,' think of the howling wilderness there used to be which a bold Baron has turned into a pretty garden; and then its frightful and sole tenant, whom not even the threats of Don Juan, nor all Mozart's music to boot, would have prevailed on any Leporello to ask to supper! It made me sad, that dreadful place, and I used to miss the dear old Globe. That, too, is gone, the wonder and joy of one's childhood, which made our geographical studies so delightfully incomprehensible, as set me, for one, wondering how funny it would be if the world were turned inside out, and we lived within, instead of on its outer surface. How attached we get even to ugly and repulsive things! I remember quite well, in my early days, when the only exit southward from town was the London Bridge Terminus, that one of the joys of the long journey in the luggage-laden cab, on the occasion of the annual family exodus to the seaside, from the West End, were certain objects—now, alas! gone for ever. What a pleasant journey it used to be, that dreary drive. The Marble Arch, all white and glittering, and ugly, black, frowning Newgate; then there was Middle Row, where the road grew narrow, and the funny old gabled houses, and the steep hill; then

there was the great dome of St. Paul's, with its shining cross; and then the Exchange and the gold grasshopper. How changed it all looks now, how stupid, and common, and downright ugly, as seen from the top of a 'bus as we go Citywards in the morning.

And old Temple Bar is going, and Northumberland House has become, like my old haunted houses, a thing of the past. But it is indeed sad to learn that one of the prettiest, brightest, quaintest things in Europe is doomed to destruction—something that few of us who have gone abroad have failed to visit, and from which still fewer had failed to bear away the sunniest recollections—memories that had a charm like the faint, sweet perfume of the woods in autumn, when the leaves had fallen, or like the melody of an old-world song.

The old Grand Béguinage is no more! The quiet, happy birds that built and nestled there have flown, and their old nests are now desolate and deserted. Dear old Grand Béguinage! If ever on this earth there seemed to be a place which fittingly might be called 'a home of ancient peace,' surely it was there. And yet it was set down, six centuries ago and more, in the heart of one of the most populous and busy towns in Europe. Few, indeed, have seen so many battles and known so many revolutions as Ghent. Over and over again have a besieging force lain around it; over and over again have victorious troops poured through the breaches of her walls or thundered in at her gates; over and over again have pillage, and sack, and slaughter wrecked her buildings and desolated her people; and yet the Béguinage has stood all through it, like the Pyramids of Egypt, which alone—so Eastern legends tell—of all the works of

man survived the universal deluge. Nor were these the only opposing influences against which this extraordinary institution, one of many in Belgium, had to contend. Early in its history its denizens were suspected, I know not with what amount of truth, of sympathy with a certain mysticism, not wholly unlike the 'spiritualism' of our own time, and which, early in the fourteenth century, had begun to infect the German theological schools. The sects that had their rise in a grotesque exaggeration of piety, either in ethics or practice, at that point where devotion degenerates into superstition, and enthusiasm becomes fanaticism, are sufficiently well known to need no description here. Foremost among them are, of course, the Flagellants, and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, or of 'Free Love.' Whether these worthies professed the agreeable doctrines with which Miss Woodhull has made us familiar I know not; but if they did, I am sure it was as well they were so unpopular. Be that as it may, the poor Béguines, albeit they were lone women, with never a Beecher to their Tilton, got a bad name, as having adopted these objectionable views; and in 1311 a thunderbolt fell in the midst of their quiet little world, in the shape of what is known as the Clementine Constitution of the Council of Vienna. One may fancy how shocked and frightened all the poor little ladies were at this unpleasant occurrence, and how the bigwigs and bishops improved the occasion to harry and vex them; and how the furred and tippeted canons and the university dons from Louvain became extraordinarily orthodox, with one eye very wide awake on Naboth's vineyard. But the Béguines picked up courage, and they wrote off to the Pope, John XXII., and he, like a

good man and a father, came to their rescue, and gave them leave to choose a rule of life which none dare assail. So on that score they had peace, and were let alone all through the stormy history of the city.

Even when the Calvinists were sacking the churches, and well-nigh two centuries later, when the great English general entered Ghent at the head of the army of a Protestant state, they continued to live in peace. The cold, treacherous policy of Joseph II. of Austria could not dislodge them; no, nor yet the storm of the great French Revolution, which came here early. Béguines were walking to and fro in the quiet streets of their little citadel, and going placidly through the tranquil routine of their daily life, much the same then as it is nowadays, under the *régime* which made religion a crime, and at headquarters got the ill-sounding name of the 'Reign of Terror,' which will probably stick to it for a very long time. And even when in its turn Protestant Holland held sway in Ghent, the Dutch government not only left the Béguines unmolested, but protected and patronised them.

To what sinister influence, then, has it at last succumbed? Awhile ago I spoke of Haussman and the ruthless demands of his 'city improvement' schemes. After all these hairbreadth escapes, and weathering six centuries of storm, the old Grand Béguinage has fallen a victim to the same vulgar agency which might doom a row of stucco villas to destruction, or compass the demolition of a tumble-down tavern, for the sake of the 'eligible building land' on which they stood. Have we not seen, one after another, poor Sir Christopher Wren's queer old City churches sold by the stern demand of 'City improvements'? To me, the only wonder

is that the old Grand Béguinage lasted long enough for the present writer to chronicle with regret and veneration its 'decline and fall.'

The city of Ghent has ever been, as I have said, a turbulent city. Part of her success and interest lies in this very circumstance, and in past times hardly a century passed without her being the prey of contending forces. Past and present are met in her streets; the history of well-nigh every great nation in Europe, as it passes over the path of time, has halted here. The fruits of labour and the triumphs of art, no less than the spoils of war, have helped to build her up; while nature with a lavish hand has scattered benedictions on the fertile plains that lie around her walls.

As we approach the city through the tree-girt fields that skirt the iron road, and its tall gabled houses, and beyond these the towers and spires of its halls and churches, rise to view, with here and there a tall, waving poplar or shady lime tree to vary the picturesque prospect; as we first catch a glimpse of a factory chimney or two, which tell of present industry, and the whirr of its factories and the busy hum of labour greet our ear in pleasant harmony with the gay carillon of the bells aloft; as we enter its populous streets, each with its history and varied associations, it is not easy to realise that this is the city of the Van Artaveldtes, or to recognise in its peaceful and industrious inhabitants the descendants of the 'terrible' *Chaperons-Blancs*. Every one who has been to Ghent knows the little square of *Ste. Pharaïlde*. The church which gave the place its name has long since passed away, but there is the old *Marché aux Poissons* with *Quellius'* fantastic water-god above the entrance, and

facing it the frowning, gloomy old gateway of the *Oudeburg* of the *St. Graaven-steen*, founded by mighty *Baudouin 'Bras de Fer'* a thousand years and more ago. Here it was, and all through the narrow, winding streets as far as the *Marché de Vendredi*, where I suppose they sold fast-day fare, that, on the 2nd of May, 1348, that terrible battle began which lasted three days and made *Jacques van Artaveldte* lord of Ghent. He was a great man, that doughty brewer; and in the shortlived exercise of his power he contrived to do great things, and, among others, concluded a treaty of commerce with the king of England. But his fickle fellow-citizens soon wearied of his rule, and in less than two months' time the great *Ruwaert* was slain on his own threshold.

Then there is the old cathedral, a wonderful and glorious place, and a perfect treasure-house of art. All its echoes are like dirges, and the glittering shadows in its aisles like ghosts. It is not like the glorious churches of Italy, where cherub faces smile on you from golden clouds, and all the air is bright and sunny, and shining with coloured marbles, and paintings, and soft hangings. Nor yet is it like the old churches at home, sad and soothing, like the grave of something we loved, departed and dead. Old *St. Bavon's* is melancholy, and its memories are depressing; its walls have seen bitter strife, for Ghent did not escape the storms of the crisis in the sixteenth century. That most dire of scourges, whose vengeance is a bitter irony, 'religious' warfare, raged here pitilessly. Of all the most horrid, unnatural things in this world, surely it is strife in God's House. Human nature at its worst might well be spared the satire of such a

possibility. Those solemn saints, the family portraits in this house of the poor man, which we see through the carved screens in the musty old chapels, how looked they on at those sad, sorry scenes? The iron tongues of the bells no longer utter summons to peaceful worshippers, but clamour angrily in half-protesting, half-complaining tones. Through the painted windows no longer gleams the light of altar tapers kindled for solemn rite; the faces of the saints therein are all aglow with wrathful fire. The solemn organs are hushed, pike and hammer thunder at the oaken doors. Through the open portals a wild mob of pillagers pours into the vast echoing nave; its solemn stillness is broken by rude jest and fierce shout. Hatchet and pick ring on the fretted stone, and altar and shrine are laid low. Aumbry and coffer are rifled, and their precious treasures scattered to the winds.

Such are the memories of St. Bavon's Cathedral. Let us hurry out of its gloomy aisles into the bright, merry street. Up aloft in the belfry, where the golden dragon gleams above his nest, 'Roland' is chiming merrily 'Er ist victorie in het landt.' All through these streets we go with that sound of victory and strife echoing in our ears. Here is the Place d'Armes. It is pleasant to wander here on a summer's night under the linden-trees, whose tender leaves, as the soft evening breeze tenderly kisses them and whispers to them, breathe out their sweet perfume. All around in the twilight we see the mellow glimmer of lighted chambers, and across the perfume-laden air comes faintly the sound of sweet music. Surely here is peace; but what says the pale moon, that looks quite tearfully, we might fancy, out of her aureole

of clouds on the sad place? Here it was, one November night in the year 1789, the principles that bear the name of that era were stamped in blood. Four days that terrible battle lasted, and the gutters ran with the best and bravest blood in Ghent. And so it is that, turn where I will in this quaint, wonderful old city, all its memories seem sad and terrible, and then there rises before my mind the shadow of her greatest citizen and the most unfortunate of her rulers. One looks in vain for the spot where that wondrous career began; it has long since passed away. Here in Ghent it commenced, on the 25th of February, in the year of our Lord 1500. It was a life marked by great victories, by singular prowess of arms, by a vast extent of power, by such success and grand good fortune as seldom fall to the lot of one man to enjoy. Seldom have so many crowns, the symbols of power over flourishing kingdoms, rested on one head. It was a brilliant and glorious career, one of those which stand alone in history, yet marked withal by great sorrow, embittered by disappointed ambition, and tainted with chagrin and remorse. None but the great heart which has compassed such triumphs could have weighed to the full the bitterness of such reverses, and it did not even then break, as one might have deemed it would, when all the old world was dead around it, and the newer social order was rising out of the chaos full of a young, fresh, and vigorous life.

Charles V. was wont to say that Paris would go into his glove. The great monarch's 'mot' may perhaps excuse one on my part when I say that he had with his native town, as the saying is, his hands full. Yet he loved Ghent dearly, and his native land. His

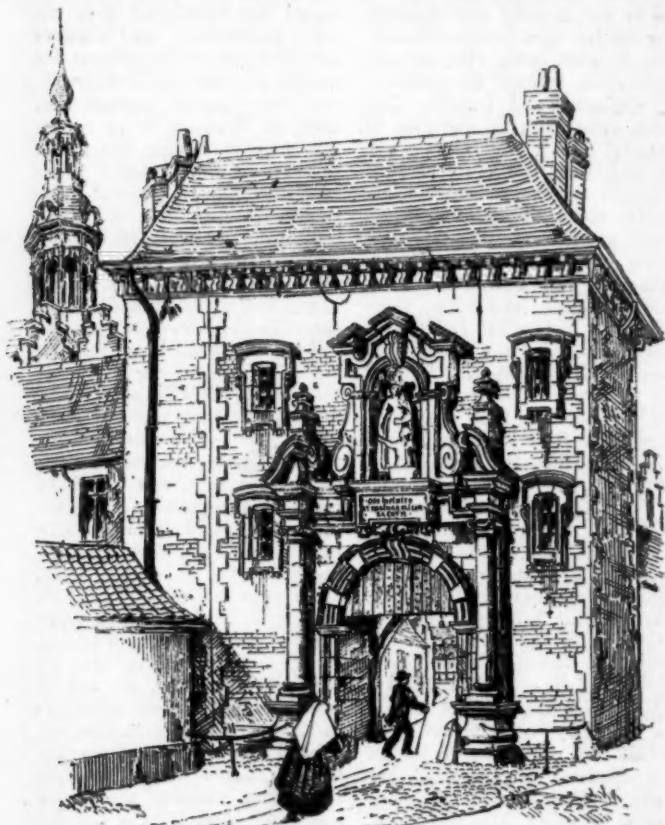
Flemish home was in his heart, his Flemish friends around him, when, yet a boy in years, he set foot on the fairest of his possessions, then in the zenith of her splendour and prosperity. He looked coldly on her people, the proudest in Europe; and, Catholic as he was, received with haughty reserve the aged Ximenes hastening, weighed down with age and infirmities, to greet the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella. But time came when he was glad of Spanish arms to keep his Flemings in subjection; and at the point of Spanish swords he entered his native city. No joyous acclamations greeted him when his war-horse once more trod the streets where its great master had taken his first steps; and when, years after, his stormy life had passed into the peace of the cloister, the men of Ghent rose and levelled to the ground the great fortress he had raised, in their anxiety to forget that their mightiest fellow-citizen had had the ill-luck to be their lord.

But what fortune, what success was his! He was a child when he became lord of the land that gave him birth, and ere he reached man's estate four royal diadems, one of them being the imperial crown, were set upon his brow. Before his victorious arms Christian and Turk alike bowed down. The Eternal City yielded herself to his army, and the sovereign pontiff fled from the capital of Christendom. Naples opens her gates to him in triumph. Bologna welcomes him victorious. Who would not envy his glory and greatness as he passed, magnificently attended, along the gaily-decked streets of the old mediæval city to the cathedral, where the iron crown, the sacred relic-circlet of Lombardy, is set on his head. He is still young in years, but he

has reached the summit of earthly greatness—general, count, arch-duke, king on both sides the Atlantic, emperor; but a shadow, of which the long shades of the grim leaning towers were a faint type, lay across his shining path. Presently there comes news that Ghent has risen, and then the scales are turned. The home of his childhood and its citizens, his earliest subjects and fellow-townsmen are leagued against him. Soon all Flanders is in revolt. The Pope, no longer the gentle Louvain professor, under whose care his happy boyhood was passed, but a deep, scheming statesman, and a Medici, to boot, was his enemy. His own mother's sister, the rejected wife of the king of England, had ended her maddened life in durance. His son was wedded to her childless daughter. Wounded in his religious sympathies and in his affections, he was to suffer in that pride of arms which years of success had fostered. Algiers, Roussillon, Cerissoles, Innspruck, saw his forces beaten and repulsed. From the last-named town he who so short a time back did not know what defeat meant fled in ignoble terror. The crowns that sat so heavily on that royal head were laid aside one by one. All the winds of Biscay are playing in the too early silvered hairs, as, reft of earthly coronal, it bows to mother-earth, and whispers in her ear, 'Naked came I forth from my mother; naked come I back to thee, thou common mother of mankind.' And then, as the din of battle, the tramp of the war-horse, the braying trumpet and the roll of drums, the thunder of cannon and the clash of steel, all the sounding noise of strife rolls away as a storm-cloud far over field and flood, the chant of peaceful men keeping time to the

deep voices of the ocean seems to sound in my ear, and the grey towers of San Yusto rise before me. 'Requiem æternam dona ei.' Their shadows seem verily to lie across my path; the peace and rest of a refuge long sought

Fields, which, as we all know, covers the same area as the great Pyramid. This by way of being precise, and for the sake of those poor folk who can never grasp the dimensions of a given number of square feet and inches. All



Old

Old Gateway of the Béguinage

for, and reached but too late, falls on my heart, and, lo! I am passing under the gateway of the old Béguinage.

A long square or green, about half as large as Lincoln's Inn

around are the trim and tidy dwellings of the Béguines, little white-and-red brick edifices, with high gabled roofs of red tile, and bright green window-shutters, for all the world like toy houses.

Each has before it a small fore-court, separated from the public way by a high white wall, entered by a narrow arched doorway, above which is painted the name of the saint under whose patronage or invocation the dwelling and its inhabitant are placed—H. Jans Huys, or Het Huys van H. Maria, as the case may be. In the midst of the green, rather at the lower end, which is exquisitely kept, and like a lawn fringed with trimmed and cut lime-trees, stands the great church, a long and lofty edifice, uniform in style, and built of brick. Over the high roof rises the tall and elegant belfry, which is seen in my sketch just above the houses to the left of the old gate. Within, the church presents 'an aspect rather homely than imposing. It has that comfortable and furnished air so many of the Continental churches seem to me to have. Each familiar object—the altar, and its picture and statues, the suspended lamps, and the quaint figures against the pillars, and then the huge, lumbering pulpit with its great sounding-board, and the old worn benches and little green kneeling-cushions; all mark a period in the history of the place; each has its own story and associations. To how many simple hearts who have worshipped here have these things grown dear by familiarity!

The altar-piece is handsome, composed, like most of those in Belgian churches, of white and black marble, with a large picture in the midst. Over the centre is a statue of the good Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, about whom the gentle Montalembert wrote so gracefully. That is her statue also over the old gateway, where she is seen giving alms to a poor cripple, to whom a species of tub

supplies the natural organs of locomotion. The sculptor, with horrible exactness, has not even omitted the little wooden blocks, something after the manner of knife-rests, which assist the unfortunate man in his movements. On either side of the nave of the church are two large spaces inclosed by wooden railings. Within these are the benches and priedious of the Béguines. The broad central alley is devoted to 'strangers and pilgrims.' Here it was that I assisted at the evening service; and a curious and wonderful sight it was. The spacious church was filled with kneeling figures, white-veiled and ghostlike. In the dim distance the altar, with its glimmering tapers, faintly lit up the evening twilight. Then the air became filled with sweet incense; then the mellow notes of an old organ mingled with the shrill, weird chant of the sisters. It left an impression never to be forgotten.

The houses of the Béguines, all round the square, and one or two adjoining streets, or 'plaines,' as they are termed here, are over a hundred in number. But beside these there were (for I am speaking, alas, of what no longer is) eighteen convents appropriated to the younger members of the community, who there make their probation, or to those who prefer the advantages of a 'home,' so to speak, to the usual solitary condition of a Béguine. I had the privilege of visiting the chief of these establishments, that wherein resides the 'Groot Jufvrouw,' or grande dame, as the superior of the Béguines is called. I give a little view of it; the two large windows seen over the trees at the end are those of the church. There is also a small quadrangle, and some spacious apartments devoted to various purposes. One of these, a

sort of council or chapter house, or, as we should term it, a board-room, had tall windows with little panes of glass, through which the sunlight was pouring, only just shaded by some faded green curtains, on to the chequered black-and-white floor, just as De Hooge loved to paint it with, O how cunning a hand! All round the room were quaint chairs with high backs; and above the panelling facing the windows a range of portraits of former superiors, many of them, especially the earlier ones,

the assurance of his protection, and the promise 'Je maintiendrai,' and to which, in the sequel, he so faithfully adhered. The words are seen on the carved mantelpiece, before which the king is represented standing and pointing to them. Opposite him are seen a parish priest of Ghent and a pious nobleman, who had interested themselves in the Béguinage and formed the deputation.

I was shown one of the cells, of which I think St. Bernard might well have written, 'Cella nunquam



View of Principal Church from the Square.

by no means inconsiderable as works of art. The folded black aprons worn to this day, and the crimped and starched lawn frills, ruffs, wimples, and veils, were portrayed with that marvellous fidelity to reality for which the Flemish schools of painting are so renowned. Here, too, was a picture representing the famous deputation to King William of Holland in the early part of the present century, when the existence of the Béguinage was threatened, and which elicited from the king

nomen miseræ,' for a brighter, more tidy, cosy little *chambre à coucher* I have seldom seen. Another 'Dutch interior,' I exclaimed mentally, as I entered and took in at a glance the pretty picture before me—the flowers in the window-sill, the little lattice through which the sun shone brightly on the waxed floor, the little bed, with its tidy green curtains drawn all round, and its snowy linen just peering beneath their edges; a quaint-shaped chair or two, and a few trifling articles, completed the

furniture, while on the walls were some pictures of a sacred character. In this room, however, was one of the curious little buffets which are usually placed in the refectory, and which serves the Béguine as dining-table and store closet. It was of substantial oak, prettily panelled, with quaint hinges and locks of polished white metal, and in three divisions or stories: the lowest was, if I remember rightly, a sort of china and linen closet. Above this a flap let down or drew out at the level of an ordinary dining-table. Here the Béguine sat to take her meals, the cupboard door, when open, forming a screen between her and her next-door neighbour, the Béguines not being supposed to know what each other have for dinner. Within were her provisions for the next meal, her china and glass in use, and little condiments. The topmost division was devoted, I fancy, to a sort of dry larder. Thanking the good sister who had shown me the house, I went my way, and was soon in the square again, lingering there as the pleasing impressions grew and grew on me. As I passed one of the little houses, a Béguine, a bright-eyed old lady, who was sweeping her little yard, looked out at her gate and offered to show me her sanctum—a Béguine's house, which she, as she told me, shared with another.

'Would monsieur be pleased to come in?' and she said a few words in the language of my country, for which she professed great admiration. She liked the English, she said, because they were '*si calme*,' and added that calmness, peace, were the characteristics of a Béguine's life. And when I said I knew of no Béguinages in France, and wondered at it, she said at once she was not surprised. It was too quiet and undemonstrative a life for them;

there was no excitement; and she shrugged her shoulders expressively, and said, shaking her head and laughing, 'In France, O no, no, no;' then she added, '*Mais en Angleterre c'est tout autre chose.*' She fancied it would suit the female character at home. I thought, however (to say nothing of our friend the member for Peterborough), that the resolution of English damsels, in the proportion of seven hundred to one hundred and twenty thousand of the inhabitants, to seclude themselves, and



leave the poor stronger sex to take care of itself, might not be looked upon favourably at home. Besides, O ladies, pardon me, I thought with dread of the mischief brewed with Bohea, where the female element is strong, and of that magnified seventy times seven hundred; and then the spiritual pastors and masters would be eligible young men and marriageable; and I thought the undertaking might be attended with inconvenience, and would not meet with general approval. This reminds me of the bitter complaints my little Béguine

made against the conduct of some of my countrymen, especially younger ones, in the church during service, talking loud, and staring under the sisters' white veils at the demure faces. Now, besides being very low and vulgar, this detestable behaviour is exceedingly foolish. I would remind the gay young sparks that if they have so very little sympathy with the practical contempt for the nobler animal, which has issued in the seclusion of these seven hundred and odd ladies, rudeness, at all events, is not the way to convince them of their error. A Béguine makes no vows; she is free to leave when she likes; but, if report speaks truly, a Béguine is never known to avail herself of this liberty. They get on tolerably well without us, those seven hundred and odd unprotected females.

So we changed the awkward topic, about which we thought more than we could say, for neither of us knew perfectly the only medium of conversation possible to us—French; and the Béguine then showed me her pretty work—beautiful lace of several kinds and varieties. I am not learned in this matter; but I know I like those soft, pretty, gauzy things that fitly adorn the fair, point and Valenciennes; and I took a little specimen as a memento, 'au plaisir,' &c. And if ever I again visit Ghent, may I find my little friend well; happy she will always be, I know, and prosperous, for her wants are few and easily supplied. I have her 'card' now, with 'near the church' in English upon it. She wrote it herself in red ink, and was mightily proud of it.

But, alas! poor little Mdlle. Van E—'s house is desolate, and where in her new home she dwells I know not. She and her sisters departed last Michaelmas Day, and

made their exodus quite in a triumphal manner. Over four hundred had already gone (and perhaps my little friend was among them) to make the place 'comfortable.' So on Saint Michael's Day, at two in the afternoon, there came a hundred carriages, with the arms of some of the highest people in Flanders on their panels, and drew up in the square, a lady of the family to whom the equipage belonged being seated in each to receive and escort three of the sisters; strange damsels, I ween, for those Flemish dames to chaperon. When all were ready, off they started in procession to the commune of St. Amand, where the new Béguinage is erected. Here were triumphal arches, and garlands, and bands of music, and the burgomaster, and the bishop of Ghent in pontificals, and the Duke of Arenberg, the munificent donor of the site and buildings of the new Béguinage, were there to bid the sisters welcome. A writer in one of the London papers thus describes the new buildings:—"The visitor to the new buildings will find there," he says, "no type of modern creation, no cold array of stuccoed constructions all in a row . . .; he will see "*plaines*," as they are called, three in number, surrounded by houses and convents, each differing from the other, and each so picturesque, so beautiful, with their lofty pointed roofs, and their seriously-designed façades; he will see streets, opening in graceful curves upon the "*plaines*," and showing with ornamental plates that they are called after S. Amadeus, S. Bavo, Pius IX., the Holy Cross d'Arenberg; he will see fourteen convents, each with accommodation for thirty or thirty-five Béguines, . . . beside eighty-four distinct houses, each placed under the especial patronage and known by the name of

some "protecting saint." There is also an infirmary and house of retreat for the old and sick, a vast church, and an oratory dedicated to S. Antony. There, too, is perpetuated the memory of Theresa Verhaeghe, a Béguine who died a few years back, with a reputation for great holiness. The new site was the gift of the Duke d'Arenberg, the distinguished antiquary, who has got, or thinks he has got, the *right* head of the Laocoon, the body whereof, as we know, belongs to the Pope. The church was designed by an architect of great talent, also a nobleman, the Baron Béthune, a brother of Canon Béthune of the cathedral at Bruges, who is a most accomplished ecclesiastic and profound archaeologist.'

For my part, though I have not seen the new Béguinage, and am quite willing to think all the writer, whose glowing description I have quoted, says about it, may be quite true, I look with profound regret on the old deserted Béguinage. Nothing surely can replace that. Its empty, desolate houses, its vast, silent church, what are they but the body from which the soul has fled? On that very spot Jeanne, Countess of Constantinople, founded their first house, and gave its inmates a rule of life, in 1234. A still earlier founder of the principles on which their society exists is stated to have been a priest of Liège, Lambert Le Begue, and from him they are said to take their name. The first institution of the kind was founded at Nivelles, in Brabant, in 1207; and, toward the middle of the thirteenth century, scarcely any large town in Flanders was without its Béguinage, 'grand' or petit, and often, as now, both. Mosheim the 'learned,' as it is, I believe, correct to call him, says there was a Béguinage at Vilvorden as early as

the twelfth century. In M. Paul Lacroix's superb work on the 'Vie Religieuse et Militaire du Moyen Age,' there is a little bird's-eye view taken from 'Les Eglises de Gand,' by P. J. Goetghebuer, of the Béguinage. It is there stated to occupy the same ground and to follow the same general arrangement as at the time of its foundation by the Comtesse Jeanne. I trace there the same general arrangement—the same positions of the houses and central church, the green, and three main streets—that exists, or rather existed, so short a time ago; so soon, alas! to be destroyed. We sit among ruins, and are fain to cry out with the magician in the Eastern tale, 'New lamps for old.' It is the old things that bear the charm. When they are gone the fairy palace itself melts into airy nothingness. And then we rush after imitation old things. We have a mediæval revival, and, as a necessary result, no end of 'sham antiques.' People, twenty years ago, took to building Gothic houses, and tried to live like Gothic folk. They had Gothic chairs and tables, and very uncomfortable they were; and Gothic knives and forks, albeit the fingers, proverbially 'made before' those useful implements, supplied their place to the *real* Gothic people. *Nous avons changé tout cela*, and the very things we considered as 'pagan abominations' then are 'the rage' now. We even do admit that on the whole Chippendale furniture is substantial and convenient; and 'Queen Anne' is not dead after all: or rather she has come to life again, and has brought all kinds of funny notions back with her from the limbo of kings and queens. She no longer eats off her plate, but hangs it up like a picture on the wall. She has a fondness for black and gold, and she picked up an

idea or two from the Japanese tycoon and the late Mr. Pugin in Hades, and is generally the patroness of the quaint, the curious, and the queer. And so the world goes on, and what we, perhaps, look shyly on as modern, our children will love as 'fogey,' as we do the funny prints and specimens in 'Ackermann's Repository,'—that wonderful book!—and our grand-

children revive as 'correct,' 'chie,' in fact, if that naughty, bad word be still in use among men.

We have wandered far away from the Béguinage now. Let us cast one look back at it and the ancient city in whose midst it has nestled so long, and gathering all its pleasant memories into our adieux, bid it a long farewell.

PERIGRINUS.

TO BELINDA JANE.

WE walked in pleasant spots, and thou
Wast loving to me of thy wont ;
We once thought love would last, but now
We don't.

Our love was wide as skies above,
For lovers ne'er can love by halves ;
Our love was likest to the love
Of calves.

That day was sweet—ah ! not like this—
Yea, sweeter than the fabled honey :
The one sad thought that spoilt our bliss
Was money.

We thought thereon, our hearts grew sad,
Our fates we vainly execrated :
O Time, that changest all, I'm glad
I waited !

For now, Belinda Jane, I'm bald,
And thou'rt an aged maiden lady ;
Thine age that side of fifty called
The shady.

Yet once again we'll play our parts,
While joy dispels oblivious mist ;
And we will see each other's hearts
At whist.

GORDON CAMPBELL.

RAPE OF THE GAMP.

CHAPTER XIX.

CARE KILLS A CAT.

BEFORE the boys dispersed for their Christmas holidays the head-master of the school at Pedlington again talked with his colleague on the painful subject of the distance which had been allowed to separate them. Being thrown so much together, as they had been now every day during terms for two years and a half, and closely allied in the common interest which existed between them and their pupils, being also on terms of old intimacy and proved friendship, it seemed always increasingly strange to Dr. Phelps that Mr. Lane should show such a persistent resolution to live alone, and to retire to his solitude whenever acknowledged duty did not summon him from it. Phelps, although a childless widower bordering on middle-age, who in more than one sense of the expression might seem 'to have done with the world,' and so much occupied with a literary undertaking, in addition to his scholastic cares, as to have little time for general society (though general society in Pedlington was willing enough to incorporate the Doctor into its community), was yet of that social and genial temperament that he would have liked to sit with his old friend over their private studies and pursuits, and to have shared the hours of recreation with Mr. Lane, instead of sitting and working alone, as he now too often for a widower did in the long winter nights after the boys had gone to bed, and instead of depending for daily intercourse on his relations with the boys, and with his third

master, who was only a gentlemanly senior boy. Still these scholastic relations were so pleasant and intimate, and especially in summer Dr. Phelps partook so frequently of the games and sports which rivalled intellectual attainments in the youthful aspirations, that he felt himself to be less lonely and less in danger of giving way to melancholy than he had reason to believe was the case with his friend.

Was religion, or were the differences arising out of religious convictions, the cause of the partial estrangement between them? Dr. Phelps feared that it was so. Each year, as he grew older and found himself less and less in accord with religious people of any school or sect, he took refuge in a callous indifference to any prevailing set of opinions, outwardly, and more than outwardly in some philosophical and subjective sense, conforming to the creed of the universal church, as a body of doctrine generally beneficial to society, if people would only observe the law of charity, and not attempt to enforce any limited interpretation of this code upon their neighbours.

With those who did so Phelps had little patience. And although moderate persons esteemed him a fit and proper guardian of youth in a school where all shades of religious opinion were represented, yet the more zealous pietists of Pedlington, whether High Church, Low Church, or of any Nonconforming sect, considered him a dangerous guide to the young in

a perverse and stiff-necked generation, and prayed over him (somewhat despondently, it must be owned) in their secret council chambers. He was, they said, upright and highly intellectual. His character was truly amiable. But these qualities of Dr. Phelps only made *it* (probably meaning 'his case') all the more sad, and *him* all the more dangerous. His good works would recommend his unbelief, so they said. The new rector of the mother parish had been urged to express an opinion reproaching the Doctor's equivocal orthodoxy. But privately that divine would have been far more distressed at the presence of a Calvinist in that influential position, and wisely threw oil upon the agitated waters. He professed to believe that the schoolmaster's theology was only defective in positive or dogmatic vigour, and declared, as he verily believed, that Phelps' sympathies were all in the right direction.

Whatever the real cause, if, indeed, any one operated alone as the source of Mr. Lane's tenacious exclusiveness, Dr. Phelps was still unable to overcome it. His friend even declined now to entertain him for a fortnight at the abbey, as he had done during several previous vacations, pleading a particular wish to go into strict retirement for a while in a clergy house at the East End of London, after what he was pleased to call 'the dissipations of the half year,' and the necessity of preparing immediately afterward for his impending move. This was none the less sad to Dr. Phelps from the intimacy which he had seen rapidly growing up between his friend and their new rector, and an evident inclination on the part of Mr. Lane to take the ecclesiastic into his closer confidence.

So the Doctor wended his soli-

tary way to town, where he had to meet Mr. Lane's contemplated successor. He also had work to do among his authorities at the British Museum, and intended to make a flying visit to a German university to procure assistance from one of its professors. On the evening of this third day in London, Phelps, returning by way of Chancery Lane from Bloomsbury to the Inner Temple, where he was quartered on a friend, encountered Mr. Lane, who in the wintry twilight passed him without recognition. The Doctor did not fail to notice the gloom of his friend's aspect, and turning to look after him, saw Mr. Lane striding along grimly, apparently perceiving no one, but wrapped in his own solitary mood. The spot where they met was not far from the door of Messrs. Baily, Blythe, and Baily's offices. Not many minutes had elapsed since Mr. Lane had been made acquainted with the loss of his reversionary interest, and had burned his grandfather's last will and testament, as we have already learned through the humble instrumentality of Joseph Foot.

Only a few days after this encounter a telegraphic message followed Dr. Phelps from the Temple to the British Museum, which caused him promptly to desert some interesting black-letter folios and take the train for Pedlington. The summons was from the Rev. Cyprian Key, imploring Phelps to return without an hour's delay. It stated that his friend was gravely ill, in mind or body, or both; that Key was alarmed, and anxious for the presence of the only person whom he thought capable of supporting their afflicted brother.

What new affliction could have befallen Mr. Lane? Dr. Phelps knew of none, nor of those which

had overtaken the Brownes. A fine moral could be drawn from the situation. But it would be flat and stale, if not unprofitable. Do not afflictions happen to all men? Do our absent friends foresee them? Is not the prodigal son waltzing with a scheming coquette while a fond mother is calling upon him with her dying breath? Will the drowning moan of a sailor husband interrupt the melodious warbling of Patti to which the fond wife listens with a rapturous smile?

'Is he in bed?' asked Phelps of Mr. Key, whom he found in possession of Mr. Lane's sitting-room.

'Hush!' Key whispered. 'He is in there,' and pointed to the secret door of the apartment which the birds inhabited. 'I slept here last night,' he continued; 'but he would not speak. He has not even a chair in the room, and must have been standing at the window or sitting on the floor for three days and nights, without eating or drinking.'

'What has happened?' Phelps asked.

'I think he had better tell you, for his own sake,' replied Key. 'The only word he would speak is your name. He shouted to me last night to go away; but I staid; and every hour or two I heard him groaning out for you, as if he was in agony.'

'Thank you for sending to me,' said the layman, wringing the parson's hand. Then without more parley he knocked at the secret door, and called aloud, 'Bedford! Let me come in. You know my voice.'

'Who else is there?' asked a hollow voice within.

'Key.'

From within: 'Beg him to go away.'

'I thought so,' said the parson sadly. 'I must go my rounds

now, Phelps; but I shall be at home in the evening if you want me. I shall not come unless you send for me.'

Turning on the threshold, he added, 'It is too severe, much too severe. He is too hard on himself. *I did not even force it.*'

And so the confessor departed. And in this brief story, which is but a chapter in the lives of a few humble and everyday persons, we shall see him no more.

Before the sound of the door closing upon him had ceased to echo through the long chambers and empty corridors of the abbey the secret door opened to admit Phelps; and the latter could see that the occupant of the chamber had been leaning with his elbows on the window-ledge, looking out across the garden and river and the overhanging mist, through which the shouts of bargemen at the lock came with a strange, weird sound.

It has been formerly said that this approach to the town had the air of a decayed city. This was especially the case on the river-side. The mouldering abbey, with its long range of ruinous walls and offices, the antiquated Gothic church, the quaintly-terraced cliff with its gable ends of the old episcopal palace and its pollarded willow fringe, the very canalised river, itself a relic of the old water highways of England, formed a group of objects which belonged less to the present than the past. And while the town, not half a mile distant, was singularly busy for an English county town, this suburb was almost always silent and solitary.

The chamber in which Dr. Phelps now found himself for a second time was part of an ancient passage, opened by Mr. Lane himself with the assistance of Tobias Graves, in the ponderous outer

wall of the ancient refectory, a part of which formed the sitting and sleeping apartments of the present occupier. From the lattice window you saw merely the ruin of an outhouse at hand, a broken parapet along the lower edge of a terrace-walk, and the misty sheet of water with a small lockhouse dimly looming on the farther bank. The narrow space was littered with books and papers. On the deep window-ledge lay a number of time-worn, crumpled letters and a faded old copy of a German newspaper. Among these the end of a pistol-barrel caught Phelps' observant eye. The favourite tomtit stood disconsolately among this litter, despising the social charms of the fishing-rods and ramrods upon which the other birds clustered, doubtless comparing notes on their master's behaviour. A strong aroma of some obnoxious drug loaded the scanty supply of air in the room. But the long arm which opened the door closed it at once. Not a word was spoken while the two men studied each other's faces, one eager and anxious, but resolute; the other gaunt and terrible, glaring at the intruder. His eyes gleamed with a strange lustre in great hollows under his rugged brows. He wore no coat. His arms, brown and sinewy, were bared to the elbow, and his open shirt, from which the studs had fallen, exposed his broad, massive breast. If it had come to a life-and-death struggle between those two, Dr. Phelps knew that his moments were numbered. But he discerned no symptoms of madness in those 'sad eyes'; and as soon as this became clear to his perception a great load seemed to be lifted from his own mind and body. He must have expected to make that terrible discovery, or the relief could not have been so great. No; that

was not a madman's gaze. It was a strong man, racked and torn with grief and goaded with remorse, brooding amidst the ruins of a life. Key had called him Pontius Pilate; Phelps now silently compared him to Saul, and perhaps the layman's simile was not less apt than the priest's.

A curious characteristic of this meeting between two tried and approved friends was that the usual forms of greeting did not even seem to occur to either of their minds. 'How d'ye do?' or 'How are you, old fellow?' would have been a contemptible mockery. The Doctor's keen, eager glance searched Mr. Lane's agonized eyes, which in their turn sought the meaning of his almost nervously. The little bird, with its head on one side, also watched Dr. Phelps with narrow scrutiny. When he appeared to be relieved of his first terrible apprehension, and looked toward the litter of papers, the bird gave a sympathetic chirrup, jumped a few little paces, and alighted on the muzzle of the pistol.

'What is this?' said Phelps, displacing the bird and taking up the weapon.

The bird at once fluttered on to its master's shoulder, and eyed the intruder attentively.

'A pistol,' said Mr. Lane.

'Yes, I see,' Dr. Phelps rejoined; 'but what for?'

'Why are you come here?' Mr. Lane retorted.

Phelps hesitated for a moment. He doubted whether he should seem to have come by chance, but he had never deceived his friend, and would not do so now.

'I am come,' he said, 'to save you from yourself—to save my friend of old days from this hard fellow, Mr. Lane.'

'Hard, yes, hard,' said the other slowly, and speaking to himself.

Then again, 'Hard, yes, hard indeed! Poor child!'

Phelps was not slow to catch the last words. He knew nothing of what had happened between his friend and Janet Browne, but had seen that some little tenderness or friendship was springing up between them, and had from the first ardently hoped that it might be so, and that (though he had signally failed in his own attempt on Mr. Browne) Janet and his friend might ultimately become man and wife, so that half the fortune which was to have been Bedford Lyte's might still become his, and with it something worth the other half twice told; for Dr. Phelps was not one of your philosophers who make light of the treasure of a woman's heart. For Bedford's secret, as a moral obstacle, he cared little and feared less, though it might present material difficulties. His confidence in one whom he had never proved to be unworthy of it was unbounded. For the change of name he did feel sorry, and had strongly dissuaded his friend from persevering in it on his return to England. But Bedford had made it the condition of his alliance, and Phelps had yielded the point.

To the new head-master of the Peddington School it had seemed almost unendurable that an honest man, his friend and colleague, should take shelter in an *alias* from some old opprobrium. But to Bedford Lyte, the naturally proud and sensitive man, the reputation of Bedford Lyte, the reputed libertine, would have been quite unendurable. Besides which, though Phelps, in his generous confidence and in his consummate reliance upon his own approval of his own acts, would have ventured upon opening the school with a coadjutor whose former ill repute might soon get noised abroad,

yet his friend had felt sure that such a step would be a false one, and that the moral timidity of the Peddingtonians would have ill requited Phelps' moral courage. Beyond these two abundant reasons why need we seek? Yet there was another reason, which of itself would have been sufficient to make Mr. Lane adhere to the *alias* which it had caused him to adopt in Germany.

'Hard indeed! Poor child!' he now repeated to himself, speaking slowly and abstractedly, as though he had been alone; Phelps watching him meanwhile with eager eyes and ears, desiring greatly to know and share the whole burden of his friend's experience, that he might, as he said, in the face of his present danger, 'save him from himself.' This was doubly urgent now. Dr. Phelps liked not the look of that pistol; and if this moment of anguish were tided over, was not Mr. Lane leaving Peddington, and again about to cast his lot among strangers?

Could our eyes penetrate those thick walls, it would be strange to see these two men standing together in that narrow, dark space, one so intent on the other, that other so careless of his presence. As Frank had ingenuously intimated in their last interview, it was not easy to see the charm about Mr. Lane which attracted people so strongly to him. But the attraction, whatever it was, acted quite as powerfully on the rude as on the gentle sex. Dr. Phelps thought it no more hardship that he should have left his black-letter folios and be here exerting his thankless efforts of friendship in behalf of this man than the Rev. Cyprian Key had grudged his last night's rest in keeping a weary vigil outside Mr. Lane's chamber door. But perhaps the parson may have had some

little misgiving of undue severity in the counsel which he had tendered to Mr. Lane. Seeing how fast a hold this love for Janet had gained upon her reluctant admirer, and feeling in his conscience that to indulge it ever so little would be a sin, and wishing for his friend above all things a triumph over the enemy of his soul, he had reminded his penitent that it was better to enter into life maimed than, having a sound body, to be cast in hell fire. 'Tear it out by the roots,' he had urged. 'Count not the cost. Spare not yourself; rather inflict wounds the rankling of which shall destroy this vice of your blood.' And then when old Ada had informed him of the severities which Mr. Lane was practising upon himself, and when he reflected how terrible might be this fight between a master-passion which had intrenched itself in the citadel, and a stern, loyal man resolved to oust and vanquish it, he became alarmed. He thought this man quite capable of destroying himself if the enemy would not yield. He would expect to carry the fortress by a *coup de main*, and would chafe at the slightest repulse. So Mr. Key had watched and prayed throughout the night, and in the early morning had telegraphed for Phelps.

'Hard, hard; yes indeed, hard,' Mr. Lane continued to mutter. 'Poor child!'

Phelps was quite at a loss. Did Bedford mean Eleanor Bailly? or had something happened in Pedlington during his absence, and was Janet Browne the subject of this lament? Mr. Lane's presence in the neighbourhood of Bailly's office in Chancery Lane, which Phelps had so recently witnessed, inclined him to think that some circumstance had lately revived the misery concerning Miss Bailly, whatever that

misery might be. The old, frayed, soiled letters and newspaper in the window indicated the same source of grief and remorse. But some secret power of divination suggested another name, and Dr. Phelps went at once to the point. 'Do you mean pretty Janet Browne?' he asked.

Mr. Lane nodded, still gazing intently at his friend, who saw a faint clearing of the brow, as if the confidence were a relief to the sufferer.

'You have formed an attachment for her?' Phelps continued.

Again he nodded. An unbidden tear suffused each of those dark, deep-sunken eyes.

'And she has returned it?' resumed Dr. Phelps.

But now Mr. Lane's glance faltered and failed. His whole figure relaxed its bold posture, trembled, cowered, and finally fell upon its knees at the window-ledge, planting its elbows thereon, lowering the face into the up-turned palms, and shaken with convulsive sobs.

Then Dr. Phelps knew that his friend's love had been returned, and that this mutual attachment was not to enjoy a blissful sequel, but that, for some reason as yet unknown to him, it was an unfortunate passion, and Mr. Lane thought he had done wrong in allowing it to take root.

Phelps had never seen his friend overcome by such violent grief before. Yet he esteemed it to be a breaking up of the ice, and a blessed tenderness succeeding the sterner sorrow of the last few days.

It was about four o'clock in the winter afternoon, and the room was almost dark; but still the figure of the strong man knelt in its weakness, and from time to time a shudder passed over it, and at each of these spasms the little

bird on his shoulder partly opened its wings and closed them again with a gentle chirrup, as though it approved of nature's sweet and spontaneous relief. On a sudden a faint glimmer of light, soft and radiant, lit up the bowed head and kneeling form, and threw into bold relief that of the small bird, which uttered a melodious trill, half sad, half joyous, in its minor key. Mr. Lane lifted his head, upon which a golden radiance fell; and presently without, in the space where previously the grey mist had blurred the landscape, a glorious rainbow now appeared. The canaries came fluttering to a perch in the embrasure of the window, and all this little company gazed with rapture at the changing splendours of the bow, which seemed placed there by the beneficent Father in token of His abiding goodness and watchful care over His erring children.

Doubtless this thought crossed the minds of these two men at the same time; for as the bow faded out of the heavens, two gently-spoken words were uttered by the kneeling man, and Dr. Phelps (having quickly stooped to catch) now fervently repeated them:

'LAUS DEO!'

Dr. Phelps was sincerely rejoiced that anything should have evoked on the part of his friend the feeling which must have prompted these words. For they were the first he had spoken since his monotonous reiteration of the words, 'Hard, hard!' and 'Poor child!'

'May I open the window?' asked Phelps. And Mr. Lane, rising, opened it himself. It was secured inside by a wire-worked frame, which prevented the birds from going out or their enemies from coming in when the lattice was open.

As the fresh air greeted their nostrils Dr. Phelps, wishing to

speak on indifferent subjects, said, 'What drug is it the smell of which filled this quaint little room?'

'*Hyoscyamus*.'

'Do you take much of it?' he asked.

'Very seldom.'

Suddenly the place was shaken with a great shock, accompanied by a loud report. A great smell of gunpowder and cloud of smoke succeeded to the fumes of *Hyoscyamus*, and as these cleared away before the draught of air coming up from the river, Mr. Lane appeared with an air of exultation in face and mien, pointing with a pistol through the shattered wire-work. Dr. Phelps first looked at the weapon in his own hand, to make sure that he had not relinquished it, then following with his eye the line of Mr. Lane's, discovered with some difficulty in the fading daylight the body of a large white cat, lying motionless at the foot of a broken wall.

'At last!' cried the marksman.

'Was it an old offender, then?'

Phelps inquired.

Mr. Lane reminded him of his old superstition about his guardian angel or good genius inhabiting the humble form of the tomtit, and told him that a feud existed between the cat and bird, which puzzled him much, and had made him resolve to take the cat's life. It seems the offending animal would sit in a point of vantage and watch the window for hours, to the great terror of the other birds, his little favourite manifesting no fear at all, which he attributed to the superior nature with which it was marvellously endowed. But he had noticed the bird to ail after each of these feline visits, and one evening, when pussy had been on guard during his absence, Tommy almost committed *felo de se*. The affectionate little creature

had a habit of sitting for hours on the rail of the fender at his feet, and even roosting there during some of his long winter night watches. On the evening in question, when he opened the secret door as usual on his return for the night, the bird had flown directly from the lattice window across the room, into the fiery space underneath the grate, where it was confused and dazzled and almost roasted alive. He saved it with difficulty, and was much disturbed when (going to the small window) he saw the ghostly form of the white cat stealing away in the darkness.

Beyond this narrative Phelps could learn nothing as to Mr. Lane's strange antipathy to this creature. Afterward he alluded to the period of his seclusion as 'an ambuscade,' but Phelps could not believe that he was really lying in wait for a cat all that time, nor that its appearance and forfeiting its life at the present time were more than a coincidence. However, the occurrence was most serviceable. When a man's mind is almost unhinged with a lever of unrelenting anguish, some old familiar turn will sometimes restore its balance. And probably the sudden revival of Mr. Lane's former anger with the cat, and the triumph of his successful shot, may have served to distract his mind from its one intolerable care. Certainly from this time he began to realise his friend's presence. The necessity of fully confiding the past to this faithful ally had been urged upon him by Key, and now presented itself to his mind. The old fear of losing Phelps' regard by this confidence revived within him. In short, he began to be himself again after a period of unnatural abstraction and morbid abandonment to a single idea.

'Now the enemy is fairly repulsed. Let us move out of our intrenchments, and give the dead sepulture,' he said quite manfully.

'*Mitte supervacuos honores*,' Dr. Phelps rejoined, with a smile; and added, 'I am very hungry. Let us order some supper as we go.'

The faithful Ada was hovering about the door of the sitting-room nervously. 'We have killed the white cat at last. Let us have some supper at once,' the master said to her. And the good creature gave vent to a great sigh of relief, for she had been tortured with vague apprehensions.

Phelps accompanied him into the old terraced garden, where Mr. Lane persisted in digging a hole and burying his foe, during which operation the bird fluttered to and fro with every appearance of joy, though it was the hour only for bats and owls to be on the wing. Then turning upon Phelps, who was smoking a short wooden pipe, he said, 'Let me have that,' with which request the other silently complied. A breeze was coming up from the west, and the stars twinkled out one by one. They paced to and fro on the long, broad terrace-walk, where in old times many a monk had told his beads and many an abbot planned the aggrandisement of his house and order, or perchance the very culture of this garden, now infested with kex and other stubborn weeds, the home of rabbits, moles, and rats.

'Why did you come to-day, Henry?' asked Mr. Lane, after they had walked a while in silence.

'I told you truly,' the other answered; 'to save you from yourself. Key telegraphed me.'

'You did well to come,' Mr. Lane rejoined; 'well, as far as I am concerned. It is an ignoble act, a rash, impatient folly; but I should have done it.'

'I believe you would,' Phelps said.
'I shall have to bear your contempt
when you know all,' Mr. Lane pleaded.

coming here with an *alias*!' Mr. Lane
urged.

'Ah!' cried Phelps, 'that is how the



'You wouldn't have escaped it so,
however fast old Charon had paddled
you over.'

'If you had only prevented me from

mischief has occurred, is it?' He was
too generous to remind the sufferer how
strongly he had discountenanced that
measure.

'Or if you had only kept me from going to the house!' resumed Mr. Lane.

'But, my dear fellow, I wanted you to go. I had a wish, and it was father to a belief, that she and you would take to each other.'

Mr. Lane groaned aloud, 'Oh! if I had only told you all, you would have foreseen this calamity, and kept me away.'

The unruly but honest tongue of the Doctor could hardly refrain from pointing out to Mr. Lane how his own reticence and want of candour in bearing his own name were at fault. Still he felt a secret conviction that Janet neither would nor could withdraw her love if she had once given it to his friend. Nor did he believe that Bedford Lyte had so acted as to forfeit the esteem of any woman, however noble, pure, or high-minded.

'But now you will tell me everything, and trust me fully,' he said. 'Remember, you are in a difficulty, and two heads are better than one.'

'Let us end the year like brothers,' pleaded Mr. Lane. 'Tomorrow I will make a clean breast of it; but——'

'But if you broke the whole decalogue as Bedford Lyte, I am ready and willing to forgive you, knowing what I do of your life under this confounded *alias*, which has now become so much a part of you that you will seem to be masquerading in your own name. But why should you fear my judgment? Why should I be more censorious than Key? I know you have confided in him.'

'But Key is a priest.'

'So we are all priests,' resumed Phelps, with whom this was a pet heresy. 'Whosoever sins we remit, they are remitted unto him or her.' I don't believe Pio Nono nor St. Peter himself had any more power

to remit sins than you or I have. But come and give me something to eat, for the love of Zeus. After all, the old pagan gods are fine fellows, and there's a good deal of vitality about them yet.'

Mr. Lane declined the argument, but his mind was not at ease about his friend's judgment. In youth they two had made a compact with virtue. He had certainly broken that pact, and had allowed more than a lustre to pass away without giving his friend the opportunity of pronouncing whether that breach should sunder them or not.

The philosopher ate heartily, undisturbed by such misgivings, and quite prepared to follow in the parson's footsteps and pronounce a plenary absolution upon Bedford Lyte. The latter gentleman only sipped some beef tea, which his good old Ada had cunningly concocted of meat and isinglass, so that the utmost nourishment was comprised in the smallest compass. Of this she would only give him a small tea-cupful, though he loudly called for more, and affectionately bantered her on having allowed him to fast so long, if, indeed, her story was true, which he professed to doubt.

'And indeed, Dr. Phelps,' said the good creature, 'if master hadn't a-promised, now that he's going away, to take me with him, I wouldn't ha' been answerable to ye for his life. The many and many a time I've a-been at his door with a cup of this nice beef tea, and he to order me off quite severe! Strong, they call him; so he be; and well he may be! Taking things to heart so!'

'Come along out into the fresh air again,' said the subject of this oration, disposing his little bird gently on the back of his easy-chair, where it released its head from under its wing and opened

one eye for a wink, as much as to say, 'Au revoir! I will doze here till you go to bed, which you have not done for three nights, you know.'

As we have already intimated, it was the eve of a new year, and the pious rector, without any particular direction in the canons or rubrics, kept it as a vigil, having evensong with a sermon at eight o'clock, and a midnight celebration of the eucharist. 'I have used him ill,' said Mr. Lane; 'I didn't want to be dictated to. I wanted to go out of this dreadful life, and escape from a misery that was crushing me. Ah, Henry, old friend! why did you not save me from myself sooner, and from this last sin, and the misery in which I have involved the sweetest soul that God and nature ever clothed in beauty?'

'The complications may be unravelled yet,' Phelps replied hopefully.

'No,' said the other dolorously; 'my sentence is a life one; and I have been stealing into happy households and an innocent heart, like a ticket-of-leave-man pretending to be a virtuous citizen.'

'That is a case,' said Phelps, astutely turning the subject, 'where society retains a man's sin. Condemn the poor devil to a life sentence, and it matters not how virtuous he becomes. His one sin is retained, hung round his neck, and poisons every act and thought and feeling of his future life.'

Then they turned into the churchyard and walked slowly in the shadow of the old yews which deepen its stony gloom. The weather had become clear and frosty. There was no moon, but the stars were bright and eloquent in the immeasurable azure vault above and around them. The bell for prayers had ceased, and the

last of the scanty congregation had straggled in. Phelps had a shrewd suspicion of what had passed between the parson and his friend, oppressed as he was by an ever-growing burden of secrecy, with the moral perception morbidly keen (the Doctor thought) with that vague longing which possesses some natures who have not the highest faith to trust some system wholly, to bow the neck of Reason to the yoke of consistent self-asserting Dogma, and to take such consolation as may be had in submission, in so-called Remission and Absolution. But for himself, Dr. Phelps thought lightly of such cities of refuge.

'Bedford,' he said, puffing philosophically at his pipe in the sweet, solemn starlight, and now looking upward through the gnarled boughs of a very ancient tree, under which his friend also was kindling a pipe—'Bedford, what a grand satire, this' (here he waved his pipe heavenward)—'this is upon dogma, and ritual, and all littleness!'

As Mr. Lane remained silent, the sceptic continued: 'These stars, my friend, don't move majestically with that glorious rhythmic music through their orbs of space to light that unhappy little hierarch' (probably meaning the Reverend Cyprian) 'and his dozen choristers and his score of devotees on their walk to church and back again. No occasion, my Bedford, to call stars and planets, whole systems, into being for such a purpose. A few tenpenny lanterns would do far better.'

Luckless penitent! Tossed from Rome to Geneva, from Calvin to Key, and now assailed by a philosopher to whom Calvin and Key were both alike. Perhaps grief, his proper mistress at this juncture, stood him in good stead, outweighing the bomb-shells and

hand-grenades of theology in her secret scales. He embraced her, as the unhappy will hug their misery, and she turned a deaf ear to doubt. Bitterly he smiled in his dark resting-place, standing with folded arms, and leaning his broad back against the huge red trunk of the tree.

'And this grim tree,' continued the ex-inspector of Anglican schools, 'must have been vegetating here, transacting its own affairs with decorous gravity, but laughing at Celt and Roman, Saxon and Norman, Lollard and Anglican—laughing at 'em all in turn under its crumpled old bark this sixteen or eighteen centuries or more.'

'You don't mean laughing at their religion?' urged Mr. Lane, now showing some interest in the subject of discourse, which perhaps may have been the object of his wily friend in treading upon such debatable ground.

'Indeed I do,' he calmly rejoined.

'Do you know,' said Mr. Lane, now speaking carefully and with evident conviction, 'this very old tree has often struck me as being a good type of Christianity, with a new life springing continually out of its own decay.'

'And so far you have been right,' Phelps assented. 'There is a germ of truth still in a mass of struggling decomposition, and that keeps flashing out into new life, as you say; for truth can never die. But the whole system is out of date and well-nigh worn out.'

'You don't mean that Christianity itself is nearly worn out?' Mr. Lane urged.

'Yes, I do. It cannot be the crowning religion of the human race.'

'I am sure I hope it is,' said Mr. Lane earnestly.

'I hope not,' the other said, with no less fervour.

Then a great silence fell upon them, made audible, as it were, by the indistinct Gregorian strains within the church. For a while Mr. Lane, so lately contemplating a final act of rebellion against this creed, was smitten with awe lest it should not be the true solution of life's mysteries. Was faith merely a farce tricked out with sham solemnities? Were all puppets who walk through the church's history from Christ till now? Are the soul's experiences mere tricks of a heated imagination? Do the powers of nature indeed laugh at our phantom fights?

It seemed as though a dark veil was drawn across the heavens. The man bereft of his faith, weak as it was to impel or deter him, was surrounded by a dark night. Mighty waves of fear tossed him on their inky summits and wrapped him in their changeful depths. Fierce blasts of doubt and distrust hurried him hither and thither. But now a sweet celestial light moved amidst the darkness and drew near to him. Out of the light there came a voice saying, 'It is I: be not afraid.' The words were few; but to him their import was very great. Recovering himself with an effort, he said, 'Henry, my old friend, do not put Christianity from you because I, or any other weak creature, fall short of my ideal. You would not reject our Parliamentary system because—'

'Wouldn't I,' interrupted the philosopher, 'if the people were ripe for something better. And I, for one, think it high time they were.'

Mr. Lane was bereft of his argument, but resolved to pursue the subject. 'What do you call subjective truth?' he asked.

'A thing being true in relation to one's own mind,' was the answer.

'Then,' persisted the other, 'I have subjective evidence of Christianity which is absolutely overwhelming. I have had a proof of it since we began this conversation. Is that faith?'

'What you call faith,' said Phelps.

'But could you not have this sort of faith, if you would humble your intellect?' Mr. Lane asked.

'Faith, I had it once,' Phelps answered lightly, puffing out a long jet of smoke; 'but it left me. Or rather I left it. It was a phase of experience through which I passed.'

'Should you not want it again if you were dying?'

'No,' replied Phelps gaily, but seriously—'no, I think not. I don't think I should feel any better for it on this side the bourne; and if I found it wrong on t'other, I should be ashamed of myself, and horribly afraid to meet the shade of old Voltaire.'

Doubtless Dr. Phelps knew there was faith of another and, as he thought, of a higher kind. And of this he trusted that he was not devoid; but limited his remarks just then to the special view of a special faith which was uppermost in his friend's mind.

In such a manner this eccentric sage endeavoured to arouse his friend from the stupor into which remorse had plunged him. Before they retired to rest that night he craftily but intrepidly assailed more than one other of Mr. Lane's intellectual strongholds, at once helping to 'quicken that numbed spirit into a renewed vitality, and betraying on his own part, in politics as well as in theology, a heterodoxy which, if recorded in these winged pages, would go far to justify those pious ladies of Pedlington who feared that their new schoolmaster, with all his talents and all his acquirements,

might prove a dangerous guide to the ductile steps of youth.

CHAPTER XX.

A TRAGEDY.

DURING the whole of that New Year's Day Mr. Lane was really engaged in preparing a mental brief out of which to conduct his defence before the jury of his own convictions presided over by Judge Phelps. The latter judicial personage with a covert smile saw him inwardly toiling over it. 'How simple is this pious penitent!' thought Phelps. And of Henry Phelps, D.C.L., M.A., &c., &c., Mr. Lane would often think in almost the very same terms, 'How simple he is!' But now something dreadful existed in that simplicity which knew no sin—no sin at least of the deadly order; for we must bear in mind that Mr. Lane was now bound to regard iniquity from a theological point of view. On whichever side the truth may have reposed, Mr. Lane laboured painfully, and Dr. Phelps smiled curiously. And during this strange day, unique in the annals of Henry Phelps, while he was waiting to receive the penitent's confession, he philosophised on sin and on responsibility, and on what might constitute guilt in the heavenly courts. This man before him, this old and tried friend, had evidently sinned. He could not be a dreamer. He surely had committed some, if not many, of what their former schoolfellow, Key, would consider 'deadly sins.' Yet Dr. Phelps, 'for the life of him,' as we say, but really to save his own self-respect, could not kindle in his breast one spark of indignation against the offender. From which, reasoned out fully, and at great length and with great

perspicuity—for the Doctor was no addle-brained logician—he concluded that, as far as man's judgment could approach the Divine judgment, a man was not guilty before God, in relation to the breaches of the law committed by him; that is to say, not absolutely and unconditionally so. Yet this admission militated fiercely against his previous conclusions on this subject. Hitherto, if it had been possible to collect all the facts of whatever kind bearing on a crime, he would have undertaken to measure the criminal's guilt. And hitherto he had never doubted, and even now did not doubt, that his indignation would be in proportion to the malefactor's culpability.

With a half-morbid, half-honest perversity, Mr. Lane *would* believe that he was about to forfeit the esteem of the one man whose good opinion was to him in the place of a conscience. That he had been keeping the regard of Phelps for all these eight years by stealth, by a deliberate concealment of truth, he admitted to himself. The longer this fraud had lasted, the more base it had seemed to him. His own self-contempt on that account deepened in proportion to the sublimity of the trust which Phelps had reposed in him. Over this godlike man who had never sinned he had even assumed an air of superiority, had sometimes actually dared to speak and behave as if his own hidden baseness had placed him on a level of worldly wisdom above his friend.

In the ardour of youth, both loving alike what was noble, hating what was vile, yet feeling that in them, as in other souls which sought the light, there were possibilities of rambling into dark places, and of becoming at home in them, and finding the darkness to suit their dimmed eyesight,

these two lads had bound themselves together in a solemn compact. They would not fall from their heights. Obstacles might be reached which should impede their upward progress at this stage, or at the next, or the next. These might be overcome each in turn, or some one obstacle or another might prove insuperable. Certain moral summits might rear their heads inaccessible to the weary footsteps or the baffled spirits of these Titans; but fall from any level once attained to would they never. Hand-in-hand they stood strong in themselves, in each other, in that high and holy trust which all young men ought to have in celestial help, which can never have failed them yet. On the threshold of life—there they threw down the gauntlet to the powers of evil. 'We will do no base thing,' they said.

But they parted, and for one of them the powers which tend evil and animate its agents had proved too strong. They met him as he walked alone, overbold, and took up his gauntlet. He trusted too much in himself, and fell—fell from his early heaven down, down into a very abyss, a Gehenna of passion. And out of this he had crawled, with an *alias*, with closed lips, and a sullen brow, contracting swiftly and sullenly when one attempted to win his confidence, when one who was noble made generous attempts to encourage him to begin again to be noble by confessing his baseness and deploring it. This false pride, sullen, cowardly as it was, had bound his old iniquity up with his new righteousness, had made it part and parcel of his daily life for all these years, which otherwise had been fair enough since that one dark episode.

Mr. Lane's self-imposed isolation, though partly the result of a

habit both of mind and temper, was mainly traceable to this conviction. And this deep, dreary self-abasement which he thought humility, but which was so closely allied to pride, had preyed upon him and eaten into his very possibility of self-respect—that condition without which a man of true nobility, however humble in attainments, cannot be said to ‘live’ at all.

How little those who prattle with glib tongues or who write shallow phrases about suicide can have read the human heart! If they could trace, or would trace, the inner experiences of a deeply-tried man, how often they would see that the mere animal life has proved insupportable to one whose spirit was dead within him because he had lost some needful condition of its life! However this may be, Mr. Lane’s secret had pressed upon him with a crushing weight. The injury which he had unwillingly inflicted upon the girl whom he loved with a passion all the stronger for the restraint to which it was subjected seemed a natural consequence of the concealment which he had practised. His proper misery had driven him to tell more of his baseness to a priest than he had dared to tell to his friend; and the priest had told him candidly that his confession must go further to become complete. This he acknowledged, and resolved to avoid a new deception. But how was the confidence to be given now? When Phelps came uninvited Mr. Lane was in very deep waters. This oldest and best friend came trusting, though injured by exclusion from confidence. He came holding out a hand, and saying: ‘You are sinking under that heavy secret. I have watched you swimming bravely, have seen you baffling and baffled by the waves of sorrow. I want

to pull you ashore and to open that foul bag and cast its contents to the purifying winds of forgiveness, that we two may again walk hand-in-hand in the sunshine of friendship, still trustfully, as of old, but humbly because one of us fell, and his fall breaks our pride; for we are both men, brothers—nay, almost one man, so closely are our souls knit.’

As this generous affection on the part of Phelps unfolded itself clearly to Mr. Lane, he had no longer a wish to reject it, or to endeavour to retain it on false terms, only a deep regret that by doing so hitherto he had injured this guileless friend, and put him now at length to the pain of withdrawing his regard from one to whom he had so long given it. For still Mr. Lane dreaded the result of his disclosures. Without incriminating others, he could not even avail himself of the whole truth in his own defence. The task was a very hard one. Let the innocent only sneer at it! The more this guilty but conscientious man studied it, the less prepared with it he was. The New Year’s Day wore itself out, and a great part of the night, yet nothing had been said upon that subject on which it was understood that at length there was to be confidence between them.

In the long, dreary corridor outside the sitting-room door a forlorn old clock struck twelve. The strokes seemed interminably lengthened out, and the solemn sounds went echoing about the gloomy halls and passages. Then the silence was made audible by its sonorous ticking without, and within by the plaintive wail of a kettle on the hob, now parting with its last residue of water in a feeble wreath of vapour, anticipating a swift and fiery dissolution.

‘Did you think I was in love

with Eleanor as a boy?' asked Mr. Lane at length, speaking abruptly.

Dr. Phelps replied, 'Certainly.'

'But I was *not*,' Mr. Lane rejoined. 'I never saw that magic light on tree or bower, I never felt that glorious ecstasy called love, till quite lately. The object of my boyish passion was the place which you took from me at school.'

'From you?'

'Well, which you got, and I didn't get.'

'You did your best to get it,' observed Phelps, who desired chiefly to draw out his friend's natural characteristics, and to make him feel and speak on a topic too long shrouded with mystery.

'Yes,' Mr. Lane assented, 'I did my best, I drove furiously, and I wish the race were to come again.'

He glared defiance at the L.L.D., and the latter glanced at him with kindling eyes and black, bristling moustache. But soon Mr. Lane's countenance fell, in contemplation of what was to come. Still, as a brave yet judicious general will avail himself of all natural and incidental advantages, so he fought from point to point in this dismal history. 'I drove furiously,' he repeated, 'but my horses fell lame. I was undergoing a fire of excitement, anger, and indignation, toward the finish, which you knew nothing about.'

'I have often thought so since,' the Doctor candidly replied. 'But come, fire away!'

'You remember my fight with Baily?' Mr. Lane continued, as if anxious to make the most of his past achievements.

Phelps nodded. His stiff black moustache projected, and his dark eyes twinkled with satisfaction.

'If I hadn't licked him,' continued Mr. Lane, 'I should never have had to confess any sins; for I should have gone away and hanged myself forthwith.'

'Happy dispatch,' suggested the Doctor. And Mr. Lane, grimly smiling, appeared to think that there might be a less satisfactory solution of certain difficulties than the whimsical custom to which his friend alluded.

'You know why I hated him?' the latter resumed.

Again Phelps nodded.

'Yes,' said Mr. Lane, seeing that his friend understood the case. 'Yes; the brute treated Eleanor badly. He has always behaved ill to every one but his father. *Arades ambo*.'

'Still,' said the provokingly fair judge, 'I would put that to his credit. A good son must have a redeeming point.'

'Well,' Mr. Lane rejoined bitterly, 'the old dog and the young hound together have run me down with fidelity and tenacity of purpose, and, as far as my hereditary advantages went, have ruined me. But God forgive them! And as to my inheritances, let them go. But oh! I little knew how they were torturing *her* until just before the crisis. You know their house was the only home of my orphaned boyhood. As I grew older I gradually saw that George Baily had a secret power over her, to use in my absence, to conceal in my presence. I saw too that a restless devil within her goaded her always to fight him rather than let the strife languish. Indeed, when I was there she often had the best of it, for my presence stayed his hand. In that last Christmas holidays, before our final struggle in which you beat me so ignominiously, Eleanor and I were thrown much together; and to my surprise she clung to me as her natural protector, and spoke frequently of the Bails (her father and brother, as I had till then believed) as her natural enemies. I had no clue to the interpretation of all this.'



CAPE OF THE GAMP.

"I was standing over the dead body of a tall, powerful man."

with Eleanor as a boy?' asked Mr. Lane at length, speaking abruptly.

Dr. Phelps replied, 'Certainly.'

'But I was not,' Mr. Lane rejoined. 'I never saw that magic light on tree or bower, I never felt that glorious ecstasy called love, till quite lately. The object of my boyish passion was the place which you took from me at school.'

'From you?'

'Well, which you got, and I didn't get.'

'You did your best to get it,' observed Phelps, who desired chiefly to draw out his friend's natural characteristics, and to make him feel and speak on a basis too long shrouded with mystery.

'Yes,' Mr. Lane answered, 'I did my best. I drove furiously, and I won the race.'

His friend glanced at him with twinkling eyes and black, bristling moustache. But soon Mr. Lane's countenance fell, in contemplation of what was to come. Still, as a brave yet judicious general will avail himself of all natural and incidental advantages, so he fought from point to point in this dismal history. 'I drove furiously,' he repeated, 'but my horses fell lame. I was undergoing a fire of excitement, anger, and indignation, toward the finish, which you knew nothing about.'

'I have often thought so since,' the Doctor candidly replied. 'But come, fire away!'

'You remember my fight with Baily?' Mr. Lane continued, as if anxious to make the most of his past achievement.

Phelps nodded. His still and black moustache projected, and his dark eyes twinkled with satisfaction.

'If I hadn't licked him,' continued Mr. Lane, 'I should never have had to confess any sins; for I should have gone away and hanged myself forthwith.'

'Happy dispatch,' suggested the Doctor. And Mr. Lane, grimly smiling, appeared to think that there might be a less satisfactory solution of certain difficulties than the whimsical custom to which his friend alluded.

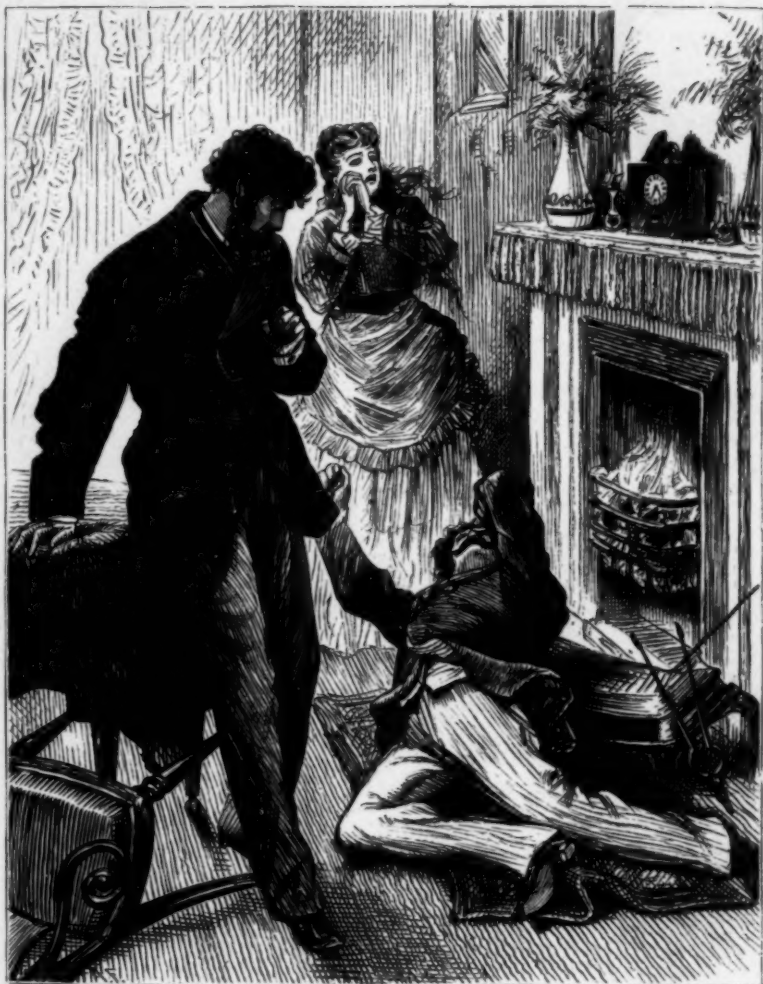
'You know why I hated him?' the latter resumed.

Again Phelps nodded.

'Yes,' said Mr. Lane, seeing that his friend understood the case. 'Yes; the brute treated Eleanor badly. He has always behaved ill to every one but his father. *Ar-ou-tes am-ba!*'

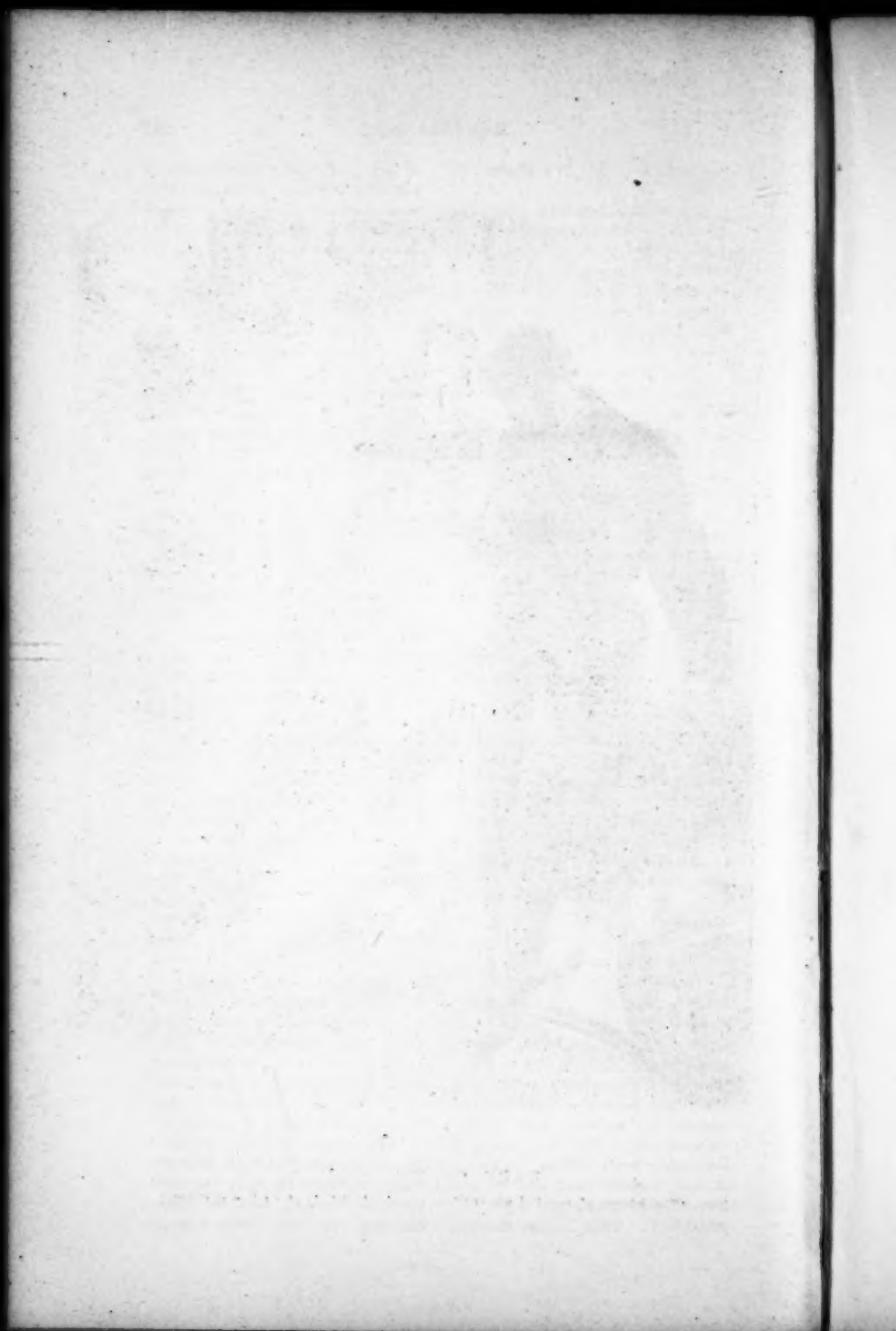
'Still,' said the persistently fair Doctor, 'I would not that to his credit. I think you must have a winning point.'

'Well,' Mr. Lane rejoined bitterly, 'the old dog and the young hound together have run me down with fidelity and tenacity of purpose, and, as far as my hereditary advantages went, have ruined me. But God forgive them! And as to my inheritances, let them go. But oh! I little knew how they were torturing her until just before the crisis. You know their house was the only home of my orphaned boyhood. As I grew older I gradually saw that George Baily had a secret power over her, to use in my absence, to conceal in my presence. I saw too that a restless devil within her goaded her always to fight him rather than let the strife languish. Indeed, when I was there she often had the best of it, for my presence stayed his hand. In that last Christmas holidays, before our final struggle in which you beat me so ignominiously, Eleanor and I were thrown together; and to my surprise she came to me as her natural protector, and spoke frequently of the Baily, that father and brother, as I had till then regarded) as her natural enemies. I took care to the interpretation of all this.



RAPE OF THE GAMP.

'Five minutes afterwards I was standing over the dead body of a tall, powerful man.'



'Nor have I,' Dr. Phelps retorted.

But at this point of his narrative Mr. Lane regarded the expiring agonies of the tea-kettle with mute complacency.

'Come,' urged the Doctor; 'come, my boy. What was the clue to the secret of her domestic misery?'

'You once remarked an extraordinary resemblance between her eyes and forehead and mine,' Mr. Lane replied. 'Did it never occur to you to account for that likeness?'

'Never, I believe, till this moment,' Phelps answered, after a pause; 'but now it flashes across me like a half-remembered dream. Is it possible that she was not old Mr. Baily's daughter, not George Baily's sister, at all?'

'It is so.'

'And was she really Captain Lyte's daughter, and your own cousin?'

'Yes.'

Here a silence fell upon them both. Dr. Phelps was considering this strange discovery, and calculating how it might have influenced his friend's character and conduct. The latter was pausing because the farther he went the worse his story became.

'Go on, my boy,' said Phelps at length.

'I cannot.'

'You must, now.'

'Oh, the poor infatuated, ill-used, noble girl!' cried Mr. Lane, with a groan of unutterable anguish. 'Phelps, my best, oldest, truest friend! how can I tell you these horrors against my own flesh and blood, against my craven self, against my hateful, mad, proud, contemptible self? The poor girl loved me—yes, loved me; and now, at last, I know what love is, and how all else is nothing when opposed to it. Then I knew nothing

of love. But if you who saw us together thought I loved her, little wonder that she thought so too.

'You know I had the Civil Fund pension of £100 a year till I came of age. Well, when I found out the secret of Eleanor's parentage I wrote to my uncle and told him that I declined any further acquaintance with him, and that Eleanor herself had told me of his scheme for our marriage, to which I would never consent, even if abject poverty should stare me in the face.

'Then I went abroad, bidding Eleanor a very curt farewell, and thinking that she would now become her own father's heiress, and would soon abandon her foolish preference for me. I was overwrought and almost distraught with violent conflicts of emotion. My intention was to let my head rest and fatigue my body. I felt the want of a counsellor much at that time, and missed you dreadfully; but was sure that if I came to you, you would advise me to make peace with my uncle and accept Eleanor's affection, and those things I was utterly resolved not to do. The old hunters, Captain Lyte and Mr. Baily, had got me in the toils, and I was resolved to break loose and be my own master.

'After a few months' absence I wrote from Basle to Baily, asking him to draw and forward to me my half-year's pension, and to keep my address a secret, answering inquiries vaguely with a statement that I was travelling. That he hated me with a complimentary fervour I knew, but what more could he want (I thought) than what I had voluntarily sacrificed?

'The event proved. He sent the money safely enough; and the diligence which brought the mail brought Eleanor also to Basle. She had run away from a home

where she was hated, and thrown herself upon a man who could not love her.

'We did not go on into Switzerland, as my intention had been. My pension would terminate with the expiration of my twenty-first year, and it behoved me to put my shoulder to the wheel. We returned to the German Baths, merely to be within reach of some quiet central towns, one of which I resolved to select for our residence.'

Phelps was not slow to notice the change from 'I' to 'we' in the narrative, and beginning to be greatly agitated, he rose and commenced walking up and down the long, dimly-lighted room. But Mr. Lane, with eyes themselves fiery bright (could any one have seen them), sat still, reading the mysteries of the burning coals, and seeing in them phantom shapes, while in his ears rang cries from lips long silent. He remained thus silent for many minutes, and the Doctor's suspicions waxed stronger and stronger.

'Go on, Bedford,' he said bitterly—'go on. You wanted me to believe in the devil, and I am beginning to do so already.'

'The devil? Yes,' Mr. Lane replied bitterly. 'Who threw that poor ill-used girl in my path during our glorious boyhood, when

strong terms,' Dr. Phelps objected.

Then Mr. Lane told him the story of the double will: how Mr. Baily had induced General Lyte to execute a perfect will before his death, and afterward presented an imperfect previous draft of it to Captain Lyte as his father's only existing testament; how the Captain had set this imperfect will aside (knowing it at least virtually to be his father's last will), and had left the fortune of which he was lawfully only life-tenant away from the true heir, dividing it between his godchildren, Blanche and Janet Browne.

Yet the Doctor did not resume his gentle or sympathetic manner to this afflicted friend, but kept impatiently tramping to and fro, and urging Mr. Lane to 'go on, go on,' than which perhaps there are no two equally brief words as irritating and vexatious to a proud spirit.

'How am I to "go on," as you call it?' he asked, turning savagely upon his persecutor. 'How am I to *go on* if you are down upon me already like this, when, so far, I had been more sinned against than sinning? Pray what had I done to forfeit your esteem up to this point?'

'Then what do you mean by "We," after that poor girl arrived at Basle?' asked the Doctor, not sorry of an opportunity for bringing Mr. Lane to the point on this subject.

'I am just going to——' began the latter. Then suddenly turning on his friend fiercely, and flinging humility to the dogs, he exclaimed, 'Good God, man! You don't think I wronged my own kinswoman! How *dare* you?'

In no degree daunted the Doctor came closer, looked him calmly in the face, and said, 'Oh, I thank the Giver of all good for this

"many an old philosophy
On Argive heights divinely sang;
And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady"?

Why had I not a home like you, and like almost all other boys? Or, if my parents must die so early, out of the course of nature, why must I be sent to a hoary old knave in lieu of a parent, and left at the disposal of a brigand in the person of my nearest relative?'

"Knave" and "brigand" are

warmth of yours, my Bedford! Now I can bear whatever revelation is to come. But a terrible suspicion had taken hold of me. And I feared that my affection for you was going to be put to too severe a test. Forgive me.'

So in the midst of Mr. Lane's confession he was called upon to change places and exercise the virtue of charity toward his friend, and this gave him courage to proceed.

He went on to tell Phelps as delicately as possible that his cousin's love for him, and her reckless self-abandonment in throwing herself upon him as she had done, caused him terrible embarrassment; that, after one or two vain attempts to induce her to return to London, he had proposed to marry her as the only way in his power to save her reputation; that she had resisted him in this design; and that, setting down her opposition merely to an heroic unselfishness, he had carried his point, and actually made her his wife before they left Basle.

Now, it appeared, when, according to rule, they ought to have commenced being 'happy for ever after,' the terrible part of the narrative was to come, and we must let the luckless husband indicate his own sorrows.

'From Schlangenbad, a pretty village embowered in beech and maple woods, we were one day being driven to Schwallbach, when Eleanor showed symptoms of great uneasiness and distress. I could only account for this by the rude stare of a gallant who had just passed us in another open carriage, and whose eyes certainly had dwelt upon Eleanor for the moment of passing with a look both of recognition and surprise. However, I soon forgot the man and his impertinence, and when Eleanor implored me to take her

to Baden, had no suspicion that she would ever be annoyed by him again.

'We engaged apartments on the ground-floor of a secluded villa, which was unlike any other house in Baden. It had been built by an English lady, and had English grates and fenders in the lower rooms. There was also a front garden with railings in the English style. The public footpath skirts these railings, and is divided from the high road by the little river Oos. Rows of linden fringe both path and road.

'I had a notion that Karlsruhe or Stuttgart would suit us as a winter residence, and leaving Eleanor in charge of our good landlady (the person who rented the house), I went off with the intention of being absent three days. But being delighted with Karlsruhe, and wishing Eleanor to see it and help my decision, I returned on the second day.

'The sun had just set as I reached home. I was dusty and weary. I remember even now how dark and cool the little river looked as I turned from it and hastened across the grass-plot to our parlour window. A strange whim urged me to plunge into the stream and end my days by clinging to the roots of a tree under water. Not being either distinctly unhappy or apprehensive of evil, of course I shook off the whim. A startled scream answered my familiar three taps at the window, which, curiously enough, was shut, contrary to custom. Why did not Eleanor run to the window to greet me? Again, at the parlour door I was kept waiting, for it was bolted within, and my poor wife evidently hesitated before opening it.'

At this point of the narrative Mr. Lane sat staring into the fire without speaking, his teeth chat-

tering as if with cold, and Phelps could see drops of anguish glistening among the shaggy locks on his pale forehead.

'Skip over that, and tell me the sequel,' said Dr. Phelps, laying his hand affectionately on his friend's shoulder.

'Let me see,' Mr. Lane continued. 'Five minutes afterward I was standing over the dead body of a tall, powerful man, who must have been comely enough. Eleanor, or her shadow, stood by me wringing piteous hands. She had lost the power of speech from fright.'

'Was the man Balbry?' Phelps asked.

'Yes.'

'Were they really guilty?'

'Yes.'

'And is it his death which lies heaviest on your conscience?'

'No. I had broken her heart by my obstinate pride. She had flung herself away soon after I left England, and her coming after me to Basle was little more than a desperate rush to escape from him and see if I would not pity her.'

'Still,' urged the philosopher, 'you have been terribly punished by your own act in having married her. You had no censure to fear from me.'

Mr. Lane heard these last words without clearly comprehending them. Then, as if Phelps had asked him again for his own indictment, he said:

'She revealed the secret of her own birth to me in honour. I cast it in her face, broke off the marriage contract between us, and then left the country, leaving her surrounded with enemies. Her heart was broken, and I half suspect her brain was deranged.'

'Yet you married her after all. That should have healed her wounds and eased her mind.'

'It was too late,' Mr. Lane sadly answered.

'What and where is she now?'

'A Sister of the Black Veil in the convent of St. Agatha, at Ghent.'

'Sane?'

'Usually. But sometimes memory overpowers reason, and she fails for a time.'

So these two moralists seemed almost to overlook the fact that Mr. Lane had killed his rival. It had been done in the heat of anger, and was half accidental, as the baronet had fallen backward with his neck over the rim of an English fender, and Mr. Lane, having sprung at his throat, naturally fell forward upon him as he fell. The law of the duchy (Baden) took no cognisance of the accident, and it was vaguely reported that the baronet died from injury to the spine incurred by a heavy fall.

Yet it will appear in the sequel that Mr. Lane's expiation had to be wrought out with sighs, and self-restraint, and unrelenting toil.

(To be continued.)





VIOLET.

WHEN leaves put forth their tenderest green,
 And all the groves are full of song—
 When insects in their brightest sheen
 Around the opening flow'rets throng—
 To Violets the Snowdrop yields,
 Proclaiming gentle Spring draws nigh ;
 And then, across Life's hallow'd fields,
 I follow blissful Memory.

Sweet Violet, thy winning face
 Recalls the spring-time of our love.
 A music in thy tones I trace
 Surpassing songsters of the grove.
 Recalls the kiss of plighted truth,
 When song-birds vied in melody
 To celebrate all Nature's youth,
 And our sweet vows of constancy.

Violet.

And yet, stern Spring, thou dost recall
A dear, tho' saddened, Memory,
As by yon moss-grown, ivied wall
Thy shadow falls regretfully.
For 'neath the little grass-grown mound
To which our choicest flow'rs we bring,
Our babe, with loving garlands crown'd,
Is waiting the Eternal Spring!

But, Spring, I thank thee for my Bride.
Sweet Violet. For days gone by,
When she has journey'd by my side
In all her woman's purity;
Yet thou may'st reveal
That Time can never idle stand,
My Violet will to him steal,
And pluck his weapon from his hand!

HENRY FRITH.



DON GIOVANNI.

An imaginary Dialogue between Mozart and the Abbé de Ponte.

(FROM THE FRENCH OF OULIBISHEFF.)

MOZART. Dear Abbé, I want a libretto; but this time, if you please, it must not be a French comedy. It is not for the court this time, nor for Vienna. I am writing for the people of Prague, who can appreciate me, and for their orchestra, which plays me at sight. There are also the best of actors and singers, and they will do what I tell them. In fact, it is as if Mozart were working for Mozart! We must surpass ourselves. But we want a good subject. What can you give me?

DA PONTE. You come at the right moment. Here is a story that I have in hand. It is taken from an old Spanish drama by Tirso de Molina, called 'The Stone Guest.' Molière and Goldoni have made comedies out of it; I want to shape it for an opera. But it is a strange piece of devilry, and no composer has yet attempted such a morsel. Perhaps you may not like it.

M. Let us hear it.

DA P. Firstly, there is an equestrian statue invited to supper, and which dismounts, because it would be rude to enter a dining-room on horseback. The statue will not eat anything, but preaches a very edifying sermon to the master of the house, who is a great rascal, and then carries him off below. I assure you that would be very fine. An actor smudged with chalk, with an earthenware helmet, white kid gloves, and complete Roman armour, made of old linen. (Mozart laughs.) Then we shall have phosphorus coming out of a trapdoor, and all sorts of devils. There is only one thing which

bothers me, I confess. It is the harangue to be put into the mouth of the statue; for although I flatter myself that I know my trade as well as any one, yet I am not quite a Shakespeare, to make spirits talk.

M. Never mind that. My orchestra shall make him speak, and clearly too. Capital! I am charmed with your statue. What next?

DA P. Next there is a young lady whose father has been killed in a duel by the *briccone*, who is the hero of the piece. The *signorina* cries and laments very reasonably, all the more because our rascal was very near committing—another crime. She vows vengeance. Till now all is prosperous for you, *caro maestro*, but now comes a difficulty. The young man betrothed to her, and to whom she commits the charge of vengeance, makes, it is true, loud promises at first, and he even draws his sword; but in the presence of the villain, who has the force and courage of a dozen, he calms down, and his sword slips back into the sheath. I confess this lover is a *pauvre sire*. He is always attached to the steps of his mistress, like a prolongation of her black train. But it is not possible to present him otherwise, and therefore, you see, all the lamentations of the signora, and her projects of vengeance, come to nothing.

M. (*becoming excited*). Yes; they produce the impossible; they hasten the justice of heaven; they wake the dead from their graves! It is the imperious cry of *vendetta* that will bring down the statue from its

pedestal. Abbé, I am enchanted with our *prima donna*; I would have chosen her from a thousand. As to her lover, he does not deserve your reproaches. How could you expect the *poverino* to cope with this incarnate fiend, who offers a glass of wine to the spectre of the man he has murdered? Why the one would have had the fate of the other, and we should have been left without a tenor, as in 'Figaro.' Precious advantage! *Caro amico*, you have no idea what such a man is—I mean our villain—but patience! When you shall see him on the stage, opposite the statue, courage in his eyes, irony and blasphemy on his lips, while the audience are trembling—when he exclaims, '*Parla! chi chiedi? chi vuoi?*'—then you will know him. No, no; a *briccone* of that sort is not to be punished by any living hand. The devil would be jealous. Body and soul, the devil must have all; therefore forgive the young man. He promises, he wishes, he even makes attempt; what more can a *prima donna* expect from a loyal tenor under such circumstances? His life is all within, I tell you; it is all in his love, which is vast and enduring. (*Looking at the MS.*) I see you make him swear by the eyes of his mistress, by the blood of her murdered father. Ah, what a duet!

DA P. Indeed, *maestro*, you are right. What a simpleton I am, not to have seen how clever I was! That is not often the case with me. But will you be equally pleased with the rest? Our *briccone* is a terrible devourer of women. He has already had *mille e tre* in Spain alone; and, besides, he has been a great traveller, this scoundrel. You understand that we cannot introduce all these women on the stage, but they need a representative, poor crea-

tures! I have taken one from Burgos, where our man flirted with her, and left her. Now this *Didona Abandonnata* cannot digest her disgrace. She hurries over mountains and valleys, inquiring for her faithless one from all whom she meets. At last she finds him. Instead of excusing himself, the *briccone* laughs in her face, and leaves her with his servant. She is made to wander about at night with this same valet, who is disguised in his master's mantle. Well, she persists still in loving her traitor, and when at length all hope of possessing him is gone, she tries at least to convert him. She is, in fact, out of her mind, between ourselves. I have thought she may amuse the gallery. You see she is good for nothing else.

M. The charming, adorable woman! Mad! do you say? Yes, in the eyes of you poets, who only regard the action of your characters and the words which you put, often without rhyme or reason, into their mouths. But we must look within the heart; and, after God, there is only the musician who can do that. Mad—fit to amuse the gallery! Make her say what you please. I will see that this noble and generous soul shall be reflected in my music as in a mirror; my friends shall see something very different from a maniac. (*He looks again at the MS.*) Ah, she comes to his last banquet! She beseeches him to have pity on himself! How adorable! It is the voice of the guardian angel making itself heard before that of the judge. (*After a moment's thought.*) Besides, this active and passionate character is a necessary link between the other personages, of whom two at least have a merely passive rôle. She will furnish us with trios, quartets, perhaps even

a *sestetto* if we have sufficient material. I have a hankering for a *sestetto* ever since we tried one in 'Figaro,' although there the lyric matter was poor enough. How strange, my excellent friend, the better you work, the less you are aware of it!

DA P. (*Modestly simpering*). Perhaps so. As to a *sestetto*, there will be ample room for one. I have not come to the end of my characters—here is one that will please you. It is a newly-married peasant-girl, simple, tender in appearance, but somewhat of a coquette, and even a little more, as you will see. Well, then, our villain meets her returning with the bridal procession. He is a connoisseur, the rascal, to do him justice, and he always has some new ruse at command. In a moment he has got rid of the marriage guests, and even of the husband, who is a mere *Mazetto*. The poor Zerlina (that is her name) is just on the point of—well, she is saved by the appearance of *Didona Abandonnata*, who comes on the scene at a most opportune moment. Then, at length, the husband, *Mazetto* as he is, gets angry, and tries to avenge himself; but unfortunately, through a trick of the *briccone*, instead of bestowing a thrashing, he receives one. *Mazetto* roars vigorously. The little wife, hearing his cries, comes to his aid, and examines the bruises which her dear husband has received from the stock of his own pistol. Never mind! You remember, *maestro*, that the night is that of their marriage. Ha, ha! Perhaps the situation is such that a poet of my profession ought not to have approached it; but you see I have sacrificed myself for love of you, and so I have written just a little bit of a *cavatina*. . . .

M. Let us look. (*He reads*). 'Vedrài carino ' H'm! Well,

VOL. XXVII.—NO. CLIX.

that was all you could do, my friend; but my task is different. It is to paint in music the supreme moment of the heart and of life. Another poet might have tried to express this, and would have spoiled all; but you, whom I love as the apple of my eye—you, my faithful Pylades—you who are the true poet for a composer—you leave all to me; you take my hand, and place it on a young heart palpitating with love, and you say, '*Senti lo battere*.' Yes, it is for me to feel it, and to make it felt. There shall be all the delights of love in my *cavatina*; it shall be burning and yet chaste, in spite of the words. The words are the language of the peasant-girl, and they are suited to her; the music shall be her soul, the soul of Mozart when he was united to Costanza. Do you know, Abbé, that I am already in love with our Zerlina?

DA P. (*a little disconcerted*). I was sure she would please you.

M. (*after a little thought*). But stay. What sort of work is this we are setting about? It will not be an *opera seria*, apparently. The villain who devours so many women, *Didona Abandonnata*, who is laughed at so much, the bumpkin who is deceived and thrashed, the statue which accepts an invitation to supper—all this is a great way from the heroic class. In fact, our only tragic characters are the daughter of the Commander and her lover; and these—even these—your illustrious predecessor, Signor Metastasio, would have dismissed with contempt, as being neither Greeks nor Romans, kings or princesses. On the other hand, a piece ending with the death of the principal character cannot be called comic. What is it then?

DA P. (*somewhat tartly*). *Corpo di Bacco!* Am I a simpleton, to make a serious opera from such

materials? I intend it as a *dramma giocoso*; and, certainly, the comic element is not totally wanting, I venture to think, in what I have had the honour to submit to you. But you take things in such a style. . . .

M. Don't let us be angry. Am I not *contentissimo* with everything? Be it what you like; the title is indifferent. When we are gone, perhaps people will give it some other. But what I want is, that all possible contrasts be united. All the colours must be bold and bright. The follies must not be *paler* than the vices, nor the love less fierce than the revenge; otherwise everything will be overshadowed and, as it were, annihilated by the last character, Death. Oh, it is so good to laugh! Now, in 'Figaro,' I only smiled with the end of my lips; here I want to laugh with all my body; but still I have not a proper subject. You know my opinion as to your *Didona*; and Mazetto may amuse by his *rôle*, but does not yield much to the partition. Now, is there any one else? Ah, you smile!

DA P. (*chuckling*). I see; I must needs disclose now what I meant to reveal only at the very last, by way of an agreeable surprise. Yes, *caro amico*, we have a buffoon *ex officio*; and I consent to forfeit my place as poet attached to the Imperial Court—nay, more, to renounce my character of Italian and become a *Tedesco*, in all the truth of the word and the dullness of the thing, if this buffoon of mine does not suit your taste!

M. I don't doubt it. You Italians are the first men in the world for that.

DA P. You Italians! And what may you be, O composer of the 'Marriage of Figaro'?

M. I flatter myself that I resemble you in some points, but not in all.

DA P. Do you pretend to be more than an Italian in music?

M. We will talk of that after our work is done. At present, I want to know your buffoon; and if he is worth the trouble, I will try to be as much a countryman of yours as possible.

DA P. Ah! Paisiello would give me anything for him. Judge for yourself. Our buffoon is the valet, secretary, intendant, and general factotum of the *briccone*. Now, this is not a case by any means of 'like master, like man.' This one resembles his master like a well-drilled monkey might have imitated Lucifer before that fallen angel had assumed the horns and hoofs. Morally, he is a coward, a glutton, and a busybody; in other respects, the best of mortals. He sincerely blames the conduct of his master; he pities from the bottom of his soul the poor fluttering birds who are caught by his springs and nets; but yet this sport, in which he is perfectly disinterested, diverts him so much that he cannot help aiding the fowler with all his efforts. Every day he curses the fatigues, fasts, and dangers to which his master's adventures expose him; every day he gives warning; and yet every day his stupid curiosity, a sort of vulgar love of adventure, and, more than all, his attachment to his master, who appears to him a great rascal and an admirable hero—all these motives force him, in spite of himself, into the worst courses. Wherever there are blows to be received, there you find him; but he gets off wonderfully, the rogue, and is as slippery as an eel, just when all seems lost. In short, he is a compound of good-nature and malicious gaiety, cowardice and rashness, clumsy imitation and chance skill, of natural stupidity and borrowed wit. Well,

what do you say? Is not that a masterpiece?

M. It is, it is! and the only character you have thoroughly comprehended. I only have to lay on the colours, and in this case shall be happy if I carry out your design.

DA P. I forgot to tell you that this fellow is editor of a journal, to which his master is the chief contributor. This is a scandalous chronicle, if ever there was one. Here we find dates and localities, Christian and surnames, age, figure, complexion, and all possible description of the beauties whom the *padron* has honoured with his attentions. And the editor is sufficiently proud of it. He inflicts it upon everybody, whether they will or no. And to whom, do you think, does he read it at last? Why, to none other than *Didona Abandonnata*, who is waiting for some little explanations. He thinks nothing will console like a work in which she is heroine of a chapter. Is not the idea comic?

M. Comic, perhaps, but cruel. I will intercede, however, with the audience to pardon you this pleasantry. And it may be pardoned; for *Didona* is a personage so completely sacrificed in all dramatic respects, that one injury more or less cannot affect her, poor woman! It is but one more burning coal for the head of the *briccone*. We cannot have too many complaints against him, in order to justify the ending. But, *d propos*, in how many acts is your story?

DA P. In two, of the length of four.

M. What shall we have for our first *finale*? I should like something grand, with room for choruses and much scenic movement.

DA P. Don't be alarmed; you shall be more than satisfied. You shall have a splendid *fête*, to which the *briccone* invites all the world.

You will have villagers and nobles, masquers, a ball, music—in fact, a grand display. Our villain, of course, has a wicked plan in his head; his valet is helping him with all his powers; others are planning vengeance; the crowd is dancing or feasting, including Mazetto, who is made to dance, although his heart is not with the violins. Suddenly a piercing shriek is heard from an adjoining room. What can it be? People look round, and remark that the young bride is missing, and the *briccone* also! Ah, the rascal, the traitor! You understand. There is an uproar, the door is broken open, and enter the *briccone*, sword in hand, dragging his valet by the hair. 'Here is the culprit!' This shallow ruse does not deceive the throng. He is surrounded, threatened, almost abashed, for the first time in his life. A hundred staves are brandished over his head, the tenor absolutely lays his hand on the hilt of his sword, the women scream like geese when the ganders are at strife, the musicians leap over their fallen desks and escape—a storm outside adds to the noise and uproar. Then at length our *briccone* recovers his spirits. He rolls his eyes like a tiger—he scatters the crowd by the sight of his shining sword; they all give way, and he passes through them without receiving a scratch, and, uttering an infernal laugh, he disappears. The curtain falls—applaud!

M. (in a transport of joy, embracing the *Abbé* repeatedly). Friend, brother, benefactor! what god or demon has inspired thy poor poet's head with this? Know'st thou that the world will owe thee a monument for this *finale*? (calming down). But say no more; now I know my affair better even than you. *Siete un gran'uomo!* You place the musician in a terrible strait; but never has more glo-

rious operatic subject come out of the head of an artist in rhymed phrases. Let me embrace you once more, *mio carissimo*, and let me thank you in the name of all the faculty of composers, singers, instrumentalists, and dilettanti, *nunc et in sæcula sæculorum!*

DA P. (*much flattered*). Oh, oh, *troppo di bontà, caro maestro!* Spare my modesty! So, if I am to believe you, I have really produced a masterpiece?

M. Without doubt; you, or MOZART'S DESTINY! Now, all we have to do is to arrange the concerted pieces. You will receive from me,

as for 'Figaro,' the most detailed and precise instructions. I shall also furnish you with a sketch of the airs which are to characterise the personages, as I understand them. As to the action, there is nothing to be altered.

DA P. My rule, compasses, and file are at your service, and I will say all that you wish. You think, then, that our opera will go *alle stelle?*

M. I don't know; but I think that, sooner or later, 'Il Don Giovanni, ossia il dissoluto punito,' will make some noise in the world.

J. DE S.







G. CRONIN

WEST END.



C. PHILLIPS-JAY

H. L. L. L.

EAST END.

GOSSIP HONEYMAN.

II.—ON CADS.

I AM not a 'good hater,' I frankly admit the 'soft impeachment,' Dr. Johnson's apothegmatic approval of good haters notwithstanding. The indulgence of hatred against one's fellow imperfections I look upon as so much sheer waste of sensational energy—the game is not worth the candle.' If it gave one any real comfort, perhaps—but it does not, and cannot. In a large percentage of cases, I take it that hatreds spring from causes more or less discreditable to the haters; in other words, I suspect that people less often hate for what has been done to them than for what they have done to the persons hated.

'It is the wit, the policy of sin,
To hate those men we have abus'd,'

says Sir William D'Avenant, and I agree with him. The best that can be said of hatred is, that it is an ordered and formulated species of malevolence, in the prosecution of which the hater is as likely to do himself as much harm as, doing his worst, he is likely to do to the person he hates. Now, as a matter of speculation, I do not see the advantage, or even the 'fun,' of cutting off one's nose to spite somebody else's face. I should, of a surety, strongly counsel any dear friend or belonging of mine, whose well-doing I desired to promote, not to commit himself to any such illogical and uneconomical sacrifice; urging him by all means to bear in mind, even 'in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say with Shakespeare) whirlwind' of his passion—indeed, most particularly at such a time—that, considering the general importance

of his nasal feature, there are few occasions in life upon which a man could conscientiously determine to divest himself of that organ, or ostensible servant of many organs. Put in that way, I flatter myself my argument would possibly carry conviction with it into the mind of even a far-committed hater. But there is another way of putting the matter, in the form of a demonstrable fact, an irrefragable conviction—that a nose which has once been, voluntarily or involuntarily, severed from its natural and peaceful alliance with a man's face, can never, by any force of after regret or later reasoning, be restored to it, at least in its integrity, giving to science the utmost denier of its due.

Need I say I do not here pretend to expound the higher morality of this question?—not for a moment. That, I take it, is the work of the great preachers and teachers; and I am not, 'God wot,' a preacher, and I do not aspire to be a teacher, but only a companionable *cicerone*-sort of commentator on the wayside things of life—with this great advantage over *ciceroni* in general, that I know how to listen as well as talk. Whenever the higher moralities are in question, and a big speaker pronounces what it is right and lawful for us to do under this or that perplexing circumstance, or treble entanglement of perplexing circumstances, he will always find me his most attentive auditor; never thinking of opening my lips, except, perhaps, on some rare occasion, to say a something which, absorbed in the larger interests of his theme, he may have forgotten,

or thought it not within his province to say. Having in almost all the relations of my daily life to deal face to face with the practical and more or less directly obvious, I am, as it were, under compulsion to give the most practical answers I can shape to meet the questions put to me, or which I am impelled from within to take up—as 'when the cap fits.' I should, therefore, tell a man, whom I imagined the advice might benefit, that it would certainly 'not pay him' to cut off his nose to spite his own or anybody else's face, not as embodying a high principle of morality, but rather such a principle as might the more timously appeal to the quality of his apprehension. I hold, besides, that a man may do very many worse things than preserve his nose, even upon a principle so low and commonplace as that of calculated self-interest. It strikes me that, in this bustling life we are for the present leading, we cannot afford to chop logic too frequently on the subject of our own or other people's motives. I feel sure it would lead to infinite inconvenience if we were habitually to decline to countenance the 'right thing' when it is done, because the motives under which it has been done are—as we understand them—not quite or entirely to our liking. I admit that I know I am here giving encouragement to the practice of compromise. I admit it, but I do not glory in it. I only adduce, in support of my view, the fact that the interests of life so cross and re-cross, tread so closely upon one another, overbear and underbear each other so incessantly and inexplicably, that 'give and take' appears to me to have become, if not the highest, at least the most commodious law under which existence can be carried on on this planet—I do not venture to form an opinion as to the pro-

bable 'state of things' in the planet Mars.

And to this profession please allow me to add another—namely, that I hold there are some principles that admit of no compromise; for which the cross and the stake are the only alternatives to fulfilment. Thank heaven, our faith is rarely put to any such test. I say this confidently, and intentionally in the teeth of Grimchin, who, with his high, red cheek-bones, limp and frowsy-looking yellow-white 'choker,' and livery of greasy black, holds forth at me at street-corners on summer Sundays, and insists—in the worst possible taste, and with grammar fitly corresponding—that such principles challenge my instant decision every hour of my specially sinful life, on pain of—he only and his magpie likes know what impossible penalties. How strongly I am tempted sometimes to pitch him from his stool, and *ex cathedra* give him a 'bit of my mind'—to tell him (of course in the vague hope of somehow succeeding in penetrating the thickness of his dense skull, and of letting a gleam of wholesome light into the fog-hollow of his intelligence) what a shallow and impertinent bungler he is, and how little he knows of the ways and will of the Divine Master, whose divinity he profanes at every second ill-pronounced word he speaks. But, of course, that is out of the question. So long as the police do not make him 'move on,' Grimchin is in his right to get a crowd about him, and to pervert, and vulgarise, and horribly burlesque, to his flaccid heart's content, 'the word' of Him whom grand old Dekkar thought it no impiety—nor was it—to describe as—

'The best of men
That e'er wore earth about him was a
sufferer;

A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
The first true gentleman that ever
breath'd.'

What can Grimchin know of the soul of a 'true gentleman?' I answer, 'Nothing,' and thence, by my own premise, am bound to conclude that he knows nothing of Him whose human charity he unctuously belies, as he misinterprets the Gospel of His lips, while vain-gloriously affecting to expound it. Contemptible and ill-conditioned thing, get out of my sight! I know not precisely why I suffered myself to take even a passing heed of you; for, though my mind was bent upon the contemplation of some things men hold in hatred, I by no means hold you as worthy to inspire so great a commotion in any one's spirit as hate must give rise to. Even though I would willingly take the trouble upon myself of flinging or kicking you into the nethermost limbo of unrecoverable forgottenness, as being of no earthly service in the world, but, for the most part by far, rather a something of condition altogether so *malsain* as to be better got rid of and done with for ever, the worst provocation you can give me will never be of a kind to engender in me more than, perhaps, a temporary access of indignation tempered with disgust. It needs a stronger lever than a Grimchin will ever be able to exert to set the mechanism of hatred in motion within me.

It is very difficult, in fact, to provoke me to hatred at all; and, when sufficiently provoked, I am conscious, as I have already admitted, of being anything but a 'good hater.' Individual hatreds I have none, though I believe I could catalogue as respectable a list of individuals disliked, despised, detested, as the most well-meaning and charitably-disposed

fellow-sufferer and sinner within the bounds of Her Most Gracious Majesty's dominions, on which the sun is said never to set. But I have my hatreds as well as my betters, if I do not make so much of them. Upon the whole, I fancy the cad comes in for the best part of my hatred. As to some other of my hatreds, there may be moments when I may waver in my impressions as to the thoroughness of my evil disposition; but, as regards the cad, I have not felt a moment's doubt in this respect. No: I am morally certain that I hate him with all the malignity it has been my fortune to acquire from the combined generousities of nature and education. He is my *bête noire*—he delights to obtrude himself upon my notice, more especially at the most unseasonable times, and, by so doing, acts as a constant outrage against my most treasured feelings. At church, at the theatre, abroad, at home, he is ever near, ever treading on my toes, and on those of others more cared for by me than my own, never dreaming of apology; on the contrary, the more satisfied with himself and his doings, the greater has been the discomfort he has been able to effect. I can laugh at a snob, or pity him; but the thorough cad excites my most intense abhorrence, and I can never—will never—show him either toleration or mercy. The snob has his excuses; he aspires to be thought something more—and that something generally better and more estimable—than he is. The cad's pretension is exactly the reverse; his emulation tends downwards; his ambition is to appear a greater fool than he is, and especially to mark himself for distinction as an educated blackguard. Born, we will say, to a coronet, it is his strangely-prompted pleasure to cultivate, as a second education,

the manners and morals of Coventry Street, and the taste and language of Whitechapel. He reads the grand motto of this caste, *Noblesse oblige*, as the devil is said to quote Scripture, only to make it say the thing it does not say. The sole obligation he acknowledges as due from him to his noblesse is doing nothing which can by any possibility be mistaken for vulgar usefulness. He has taught himself, or had himself taught, that the proper end and aim of a young nobleman's life is to be—a cad.

I am naturally led to this conclusion from observing the assiduity—I had almost said eagerness, and I am not sure it is not 'quite the most' appropriate word—with which he seeks to qualify himself to take a foremost place in the *demi-monde* of caddism. I might sometimes be inclined to congratulate myself on not having come into the world while the 'young bloods' of whom I read, and who were so much in the minds of the generations in which they had their not-to-be-respected existence; but that I feel too well assured that I am here living in the midst of a yet more scandalous development of noble degradation. The cad of to-day might really, it seems to me, be the natural offspring of the valets of the 'bloods' of eighty or a hundred years ago, who notoriously 'bettered' the bad example set them by their masters, and vulgarised, while they mimicked and multiplied, their vices. As far as I can discover, there is no possible apology for the cad as he now delights to pose himself. The 'young blood' sinned with a certain dash and courage, that won for him a relaxation of the censure honest men were bound to pass upon him in their day; but what dash or courage does the cad now display to induce us to think twice before condemning him? Dash!

—he is the dullest, even when he is the noisiest, fool in a crowd of fools. Courage!—to insult an unprotected girl, or, if still supported by brother cads, to maltreat a policeman. These are the strongest claims, as far as I can discover, that the cad ever advances in those directions.

Born to a coronet, I have said, because my hatred is concentrated on the cad of cads—on the being endowed by fortune with all earthly advantages for doing the best, and who yet, out of sheer perversity, chooses to do the worst. I hate him the more intensely, because it is in the very nature of things that his example should have an *entrain* of the best or most pernicious kind.

'Actions of kings are precepts; what they do
Seem to be precedents, and warrants too.'

as an old poet wisely says. If the source is befouled, the stream does not escape pollution; and the muddy stream of caddism flows downwards through very low levels indeed, whither at the moment I feel no inclination to follow it. Not that I have yet nearly done with my irritator or his doings. I have still a rod for him, which I have very carefully prepared in a pickle of approved efficacy—a rod which I design to lay to him with healthy insistence, wriggle and writhe under it as he may. My only care in the matter will be given to my own feelings. I shall not regard his feelings one jot—why should I? I hate him, and I wish to do him an injury if I can. How I shall try to accomplish my malignant purpose is, by publishing his portrait and that of his double, so that no doubt shall afterwards exist as to his identity; and I shall at the same time suggest what I consider to be the best

method of dealing with him, whenever he is met with in particularly 'full feather.' As thus: in the semblance of a story, to which I shall give the significant title of

THE CAD-QUELLER.

A leash of cads rampant went forth one fine day,
 Cad-life to enjoy in the most caddish way—
 That is, to do most things which two young men shouldn't,
 Especially most things two gentlemen wouldn't.
 Both stunted in stature, both feeble of brain,
 Both awkward and ugly—but not the less vain:
 Both sallow and sharp-jawed and insolent-eyed,
 Both swag'ring and noisy, and blatant with pride
 Of their mean little bodies and starv'ling wits,
 And contempt of all else—as the cad befits.
 They were strangely alike—as alike as two peas—
 More nearly alike than the twin Siamese;
 In short, each one look'd like the other one's brother,
 Except that each look'd more a cad than the other—
 As if his worst trait each had sought to enhance,
 Aspiring to rival the 'unrivalled Vance'
 In—what shall I call his most exquisite rôle?—
 His fam'd 'Champagne Charlie,' perhaps, on the whole.
 Their hats were of shapes that cads only would choose,
 They had loud-pattern'd stockings and bright-buckl'd shoes;
 They had wide-bottom'd trousers and slangy-cut coats,
 And 'Formosa collars' encircled their throats;
 They had rainbow-hued neckties with horsey big pins—
 Their watch-chains seem'd almost to threaten their shins!
 They had gloves of full colour and large-sized cigars,
 And sticks of the sort sold at Ramsgate bazaars.
 Their dress was perfection, in fact—of its kind,
 Which / think the worst kind the worst taste could find.
 Of course I admit, if his tastes were *not* bad,
 A fellow might utterly fail as a cad;
 He can only achieve what a *cad* can do—
 He can't be a blackguard and gentleman too.
 Thus, measur'd by proper cad-standards, I'm clear
 Two more complete cads you'd not meet in a year.

Now it happened uncommonly ill for the pair,
 A GENTLEMAN that day was taking the air;
 A tall, handsome, thoughtful-eyed, brave-carriaged man,
 Whose features a woman might pleasantly scan,
 And there, in a moment, as if in a book,
 Read honour and manfulness stamp'd in each look:
 In brief, he had what I think manhood's first charms—
 A large, tender heart—and a strong pair of arms.
 Well, cads were his special abhorrence; they rous'd
 Within him whatever of anger was hous'd,
 And made him, though outwardly calm he appear'd,
 A foe that cads not wholly fools would have fear'd.
 But those I've described were as foolish as any,
 And only a little more vicious than many;
 So, onward they swagger'd, loud, shameless, elate,
 While each step was dogged by—a *muscular Fate!*
 There's no need each separate deed to rehearse
 Of shameless behaviour—bad growing to worse:

Of women indignant, girls pale with affright—
 What more could cads wish for to give them delight?
 Their walk is a triumph!—a path strewn with roses!—
 For nobody kicks them, or wrings off their noses.
 A drowsy policeman, who 'sees how things is,'
 Yawns twice and decides 'taint no bisness of *his* ;'
 Then turns his official attention once more
 To drowsing—and noticing less than before.
 And so the detestable pair go their way,
 And think themselves truly 'great creatures' that day :
 Wrapp'd up in himself, neither sees, hears, nor feels
 The *muscular Fate* that is close at his heels!

Cads flourish in some places better by far
 Than in others ; they love a 'Refreshment Bar,'
 With girls they think placed there expressly to be
 At receipt of their infamous *badinerie*.
 To one of these places, then, *my* cads repair,
 Their charms to disport and their rank wits to air.
 They find but one girl in attendance, which suits
 Their humour precisely—the foul little brutes !
 She cannot escape them ; they've nothing to fear—
 For 'only a slow-looking party' is near.
 So, bravely they 'chaff' her and say such vile things—
 The least vile a blush to her young forehead brings ;
 Till, goaded to fierce indignation, she cries,
 'You both deserve thrashing !' Then, to their surprise,
 The 'slow-looking party' straight up to them goes,
 And tightly takes hold of each one by the nose !
 'You'll beg this girl's pardon—or out of the shop
 I shall kick you !' he says. Then both swear. He cries 'Stop !'
 And, if you've a fraction of sense, be appall'd !—
 I bear a surname of ill-omen ; I'm call'd
 "The Queller of Cads !"—'tis a title I've won—
 And I wear it with pride—for *some things I have done* !
 It happened that, even when I was a lad,
 Of all human vermin I hated a cad ;
 And stronger and stronger the feeling has grown,
 For I've carefully nurs'd it and train'd it, I own,
 Till now it's become quite a passion—a rage—
 And war to the knife 'gainst cads rampant I wage !
 Take warning, then, both of you, if you would guard
 Your skins from disaster—I *kick very hard* !—
 And sorely I'm tempted with kicks to repay
 The insults you've offer'd to women to-day.
 I've follow'd you closely, and seen all you've done,
 And danger of kicking you've twenty times run !
 The women and girls you insult in the street
 Protection may claim from each passer they meet ;
 None claim'd my protection, and therefore together
 I left you to run the full length of your tether :
 You've run it, and come to its cowardly end,
 Insulting a girl you thought none would befriend.
 Now, precisely because she stands here at receipt
 Of every insult you cads think it meet,
 With infamous gusto, to pour in her ears,
 Your vileness, to my mind, most flagrant appears.
 Apologize to her I'm quite sure you won't—
 Be equally sure you'll be kick'd if you don't !

The strength owned between them was scarcely a tithe
 Of that which restrain'd them. 'Twas useless to writhe ;
 'Twas painful besides—as they found once or twice—
 To noses when held with the grip of a vice.
 A gentleman frankly admits he's done ill,
 A thing a cad never by any chance will ;
 So neither would these cads, though held by the nose,
 And threaten'd with kicking they could not oppose.
 They trusted to 'bouncing' : the kicking began—
 And went on—for such was the Cad-Queller's plan.
 They struggled, they wriggled, they threaten'd, they swore—
 Which only provok'd him to kick them the more.
 He kick'd them severely—a long time, I'm sure,
 And made them, / fancy, a great deal endure ;
 Till, finally, lifting them both ' off their feet,'
 He flung them, like refuse, out into the street.
 Once free, they fled wildly—not daring to wait
 A second, for fear of that *muscular Fate*!

To cure a cad rampant completely of vice
 One kicking, I reckon, will rarely suffice ;
 But though my Cad-Queller look'd out for the twain,
 He never by any chance met them again.
 From which I infer that, at least in degree,
 Those two cads were quell'd—as may all the rest be.

The moral I wish to inculcate
 by means of that 'simple story' is
 this : that there is but one certain
 way of quieting a thorough-blown
 cad ; he must be mastered and
 cowed. Short of that, I do not
 believe there is any way under the
 sun of keeping him within bounds.
 You cannot touch his reason, be-
 cause, in cultivating the qualities
 requisite to make him a cad, he
 has necessarily divested himself of
 that distinctive faculty ; and you

cannot put him to shame, because
 the very crown of his ambition is
 the doing of utterly shameless
 things. No ; there is but one meth-
 od of treatment before which he
 must cry *peccavi* : he must be
 made to give way to the *force*
majeur of a sound thrashing—al-
 ways supposing that it is sound
 enough, which it should never fail
 of being if I had the counting of
 the lashes laid on to him.



‘EXCHANGE NO ROBBERY.’

EVENING; a soft, balmy evening in Brighton; a gentle breeze wafting Gung'l's dreamy ‘Soldaten Lieder’ from the pier-head to the shore; a broad, silvery stream of moonlight dancing on the calm sea, to meet the ripples breaking on the beach; a confused murmur, broken by peals of laughter, encircling the band; and far from the brilliant lights, the music and the voices, two people standing in the shadow—man and woman, yet not lovers, nor husband and wife.

He is resting his elbows on the side of the pier, staring fixedly at the moon's bright rays, and pertinaciously smoking; she, standing near him, looks up with a face white and contracted by pain, although no tremble is audible in the almost harsh, yet steady voice in which she addresses him.

‘Have I explained it now, Hubert? Do you understand me?’

‘I suppose so;’ still sullen and immovable.

‘But please do not suppose only. Do you perfectly fathom my motives?’

‘Well, to give a plain answer to a very plain question, I can’t say that I do,’ he answers, in a coolly aggravating tone, as he strikes a fuzee, and lights a fresh cigar.

‘Oh, must I tell you it again?’ she exclaims, wearily, at having to reiterate the words it has been pain to say once; ‘must I tell you again that I at last perceive—what I have been mad not to see before—that you no longer care for me, that you hanker after the society of a girl, prettier, more fascinating than I, a girl, double my age, and therefore, I suppose, better able to share your tastes and sympathies with your woes.’

‘Come now, Muriel,’ he says,

soothingly, ‘don’t be so spiteful. If, in your alleged wrongs, you are alluding to your cousin, she is only three-and-twenty, and twice eighteen make more than that; you must at least acknowledge so much. But don’t conjure up evils for yourself, my dear. You know I have never suggested any rupture of this kind. Forget it, Muriel, and be sensible.’

‘Forget it!’ she echoes scornfully, as she tosses his hand from her shoulder, and the hot blood mounts to her face and suffuses her pale cheeks with indignation, ‘do you imagine that my nature is as callous as your own? Do you expect me to keep my vows to a man who openly shows his preference for another, who is indifferent, inconstant to me, and, when accused, offers no denial of his fickleness? Here, Hubert,’ she says rapidly, pulling a broad gold band off her finger, ‘you may have this back. It is useless to me now.’

He does not turn to take the proffered ring.

‘What am I to do with this thing?’ she asks, impatiently, holding it out on the palm of her hand. ‘You had better take it back. You might pop it, you know,’ she adds, with a bitter laugh, ‘and get a fresh one for—’

‘I don’t want it,’ he interrupts; ‘throw it away.’

‘Very well;’ and Muriel Gaythorne quietly drops her betrothal pledge into the sea; and its noiseless disappearance is but an emblem of the dull, aching pain which deadens her poor bruised heart, and threatens to destroy all her young energy, and embitter her life by cancelling the last link which has bound her to Hubert Vyner for more than two years.

'By Jove! Muriel,' he exclaims, as he expresses his astonishment by a long, low whistle.

'Perhaps you understand, now, what I mean?' she repeats, slowly.

'Do you really mean what you say? Am I to take you at your word, Muriel?'

'Yes, of course. It is nonsense to suppose that we can ever meet again as we have done, or on the same footing. We may be friends, or acquaintances, or whatever you like to call it; but not what we *have been*;' and only a slight falter in her voice betrays her suppressed emotion, although she has to summon all her will and injured pride to aid her in restraining the hot tears which, withheld from their natural course, sear her brains like hot irons.

'Come then,' he says, with a pseudo-nonchalant air, and offering her his arm, 'let me take you back to your friends.'

'No, thank you. I shall join them presently. I am very well here by myself.'

'Good-bye then.' He holds out his hand; but Muriel does not see the action, nor heed his farewell, so he turns away, not without a pang of remorse, as he sees the girlish figure leaning against the rail in an attitude of utter despair, which his conscience tells him has been caused by his wanton infidelity, and he leaves Muriel Gaythorne alone—alone, indeed, without his love—gazing into the dark-blue depths of the sea, and yearning, in the first madness of her sorrow, to end all her troubles on its broad, inviting bosom.

* * * * *

Christmas time at Rymer Lodge.

Mrs. Benfield has filled her house with those friends whose annual custom it is to spend this season with her.

She is a widow; neither 'fat,

fair,' nor 'forty,' but petite, dark, and thirty. Her husband was old, and removed himself to 'better spheres' at an early period of their married life, having first providentially secured a handsome fortune to his widow, who was so little grieved by the timely demise of her poor dear first, and so nagged and worried by him before his celestial flight, that she has not deemed it prudent to put in a second venture into the lottery of marriage. So rich, pretty, and not over-wise Mrs. Benfield, whose wealth is the golden bait many have snapped at, remains a most agreeable hostess, and is to all men the same.

The greater number of her guests are unmarried men and women, with the exception of one or two old couples, whose belief in the all-powerful attractions of their daughters is so great, that they follow the unfortunate girls wherever they go, as a sort of guard of honour. But Mrs. Benfield is no match-maker. If any love-lorn maiden is so unwary as to entrust her secret to her, with a view to gaining advice and sympathy, her hopes are rudely shattered by the widow's never-failing retort of 'Take my advice, my dear! Never put your head in the noose. Have fifty lovers, if you like, but no husband;' which is but meagre consolation to the girl who is sighing to win the love of but one, and who thinks that, if passed with him, married life must be an elysium.

Milly and Muriel Gaythorne are amongst the invited, and, strangely enough, Hubert Vyner. It is two years since Muriel parted from Hubert that soft, balmy evening, on Brighton Pier. It is the first time that he has visited Rymer Lodge; and he is no favourite with Mrs. Benfield, who is one of the few people who knows the truth of the broken

bonds between him and Muriel. Although warmly attached to the girl, the heartless little woman continually lacerates the still unhealed wounds by thoughtlessly congratulating her on her fortunate escape from a marriage with him, especially as he is now engaged to Milly Gaythorne, and 'is like the rest of the unprincipled wretches, my dear!' with her usual deprecatory sigh and elevation of eyebrows.

Muriel has, by this time, partly inured herself to the difficult task of meeting him, unmoved, in public; but she has had a hard fight to crush down her love and sorrow through this visit, for it is the first time she meets him with his future wife, although the latter is her own cousin. Mrs. Benfield's misjudged remarks relative to Hubert's delinquencies may perhaps be forgiven on the score that she fully believes what Muriel confirms by her behaviour, namely, that the old love is extinct. But two years have not been sufficient to make any material alteration in her feelings. Outwardly, she shows indifference or forgetfulness of the past, but the terrible scar in her life will never be totally eradicated; and in this early stage of her grief, a bitter worm of jealous sorrow is gnawing day and night at her wounded heart, and leaving the fatal influence of its poisonous workings on her fresh young face. The evil of Hubert's disloyalty to her can never be remedied, not even by the renewal of his former devotion; for though Muriel Gaythorne feels that she could give her life for his sake, she also knows that she could never marry the man who had once willingly deceived her for the sake of another woman.

Milly Gaythorne is a very fine creature, with a tall, lithe figure, and that gold auburn hair which

is so rarely accompanied by the dark irresistible eyes which possess such fascination in their variable shades of animation and gravity. Milly's eyes are deceptive: beautiful and vivacious they may be with all sincerity, but the earnestness which sometimes shadows their merriment like a pall is a foible of which she has often found it necessary and advantageous to make use. There is a slight family resemblance to be traced in Hubert Vyner's past and present loves. The one is brown-haired, with deep grey tell-tale eyes, which are the mirrors of her sensitive and serious nature; the other is a bright, handsome girl, with overflowing spirits, glorious eyes, a bewitching smile, and a shallow and fickle heart; but the varied expressions of their mobile faces, and the intonation of their voices, bear a decided similarity.

Milly is fond of Muriel in her yea-nay manner of liking anybody or anything; and her affection and her strong chattering propensities are afforded a favourable opportunity of displaying themselves to an unusual extent, as the girls share the same bedroom under Mrs. Benfield's hospitable roof; so her griefs and pleasures, and the histories of past flirtations and present admirers, are all confided to Muriel, who, fortunately, is a patient listener, always a necessary quality in one of Milly Gaythorne's friends.

'It is a great bore, Hubert having to go away to-morrow, isn't it, Muriel?' she says, planting her feet on the fender, and brushing out her long sunny hair.

'Yes; it is unfortunate.'

'Especially as I have set my heart on going to this New Year's Day ball. I can't put that off, can I, with my dress and all ordered? Do you think Hubert will be vexed at my going?'

'Well, of that it is impossible to judge. Men differ so in their wishes with regard to the girl to whom they are engaged,' and Muriel sighs as she remembers a time when his absence rendered the pleasure of a dance a blank.

'I don't think he will really mind,' resumes Milly, too much occupied with the subject of the ball to have detected the sigh (she is quite ignorant of the love Hubert once affected to bear for her cousin), 'because when I spoke to him about it to-day, he kissed me and said he had too much confidence in me to wish to deprive me of the pleasure of waltzing, which you know I adore; but I mention it to you because I am not sure all the same that he does like it, because—you know—he is rather jealous of Lord Emlyn.'

'Jealous of that boy?' exclaims her cousin, twisting round to confront Milly, and opening her eyes wide with astonishment.

'He is not such a boy as you think,' retorts Milly, quickly and rather testily.

'He's only one-and-twenty, my dear; and, at any rate, a boy compared to you. Why, you're four years older than he is!'

'It doesn't make much difference to him, then,' answers Milly, who does not like these comparisons; 'for he has twice taken my hand, and looks at me so earnestly and so long with those lovely eyes, and yesterday—'

'Oh, well!' interrupts Muriel, with exhausted patience, and anxious to curtail one of Milly's long stories; 'he would soon cease making love to you if you did not encourage him.'

'Encourage him, indeed! Why, I snub him on every available occasion; but he is so self-willed and imperative, and insisted upon my keeping a lot of dances for

him; but I said I could not possibly guarantee more than four waltzes and a stray galop or two; but then I thought Hubert would be present.'

'And now that he will not, you must not make yourself conspicuous by dancing too often with the same man?'

'That's just it, Muriel. But how on earth am I to get out of it? Everard will be so disappointed.'

'Do you mean Lord Emlyn?'

'Of course! Whom else? But do help me, Muriel.'

'Your only remedy is not to go,' answers Muriel, who is already weary of the discussion, and beginning to feel cross.

'But, my dear, my dress! Such lovely white satin and gold lace; much too seraphic to be wasted.'

'You might tell Lord Emlyn you have promised more than you can fulfil.'

'What? Break my engagements? How can I be so rude? It is really too bad of Hubert to place me in such a dilemma,' says Milly, with a pettish pout, and nearly in tears. 'I think he might stay; and I shall ask him to do so for my sake. Everything would be all right then.'

'That would be quite useless. You must not forget, dear, that nothing but a matter of life or death can detain a Queen's messenger.'

'Well, I call this as urgent. It concerns my happiness.'

'Oh! don't be so foolish, Milly. You know well enough that he would stay, were it possible.'

'I think he is awfully unkind, and I shall tell him so,' says Milly, as she rises from her seat, and presents her cheek, scorched to a bright crimson by the fire, for Muriel's good-night embrace.

'You must not dream of such a thing,' says the mentor of twenty

to the cousin, who should be able to take care of herself. 'It will be easy enough to put off Lord Emlyn, and then you can go and enjoy your ball.'

'Well, really, Muriel, your ideas are very ridiculous; but I am too much done up with our skating to talk any more now, so good-night,' and with a bound Milly leaps into bed, and soon all her woes are lost in the oblivion of dreamless sleep.

It is long before Muriel can close her eyes. She lies awake, gazing into the fire, and watching the sudden gleams of ruddy light flicker about the room. Harassing doubts and fears will cross her mind with regard to Milly, whom she so well knows to be one of those inveterate flirts, insatiable for admiration, and to whom the attentions of a member of the aristocracy would be too flattering a temptation to resist.

And Hubert leaves to-morrow for a fortnight! Muriel's heart sinks as she realises the danger to which he is exposing Milly; and her still over-weening and unselfish love for him urge her to swear to herself a solemn oath to protect to the best of her power his most prized treasure, although that be the one who has supplanted her in his affections.

* * * *

The Assembly Rooms at Burwood have been transformed for to-night into Shadowland! The spectres of the past are treading the boards of that most commonplace of ball-rooms. Beneath its rose-curtained chandeliers, *Charmagne* is waltzing with a girl of the period; *Columbus* is galloping with *Boadicea*; *Charlotte Corday* and *Alfred the Great* pirouette in a quadrille; *Cromwell* and the fair *Cleopatra* have defied the laws of society by retiring to the conservatory to flirt;

and *Royalists* and *Roundheads*, *friars* and *queens*, *nuns* and *Lotharios*, jostle one another in this motley crowd, whilst *Henry the Eighth* conducts a bevy of court ladies to indulge in champagne and ices.

Conspicuous amongst the dancers, both for the extravagant richness of their dresses, and their exceptional personal beauty, are *Rizzio* and the young *Princess Elizabeth*, who, utterly regardless of the breach of history they are committing by dancing together, are whirling round in the intricacies of their fifth waltz.

He is a fine, handsome young fellow, essentially Italian, both in face and figure; and the fascinating smile, and dark, languid eyes, which particularly characterise the people of that nation, must have been his by inheritance, although he is English by nationality.

Dressed in black velvet, slashed with satin of the same colour, he presents a striking contrast to his partner, the fair-haired and white-satin-robed *Elizabeth*, whose flushed face and sparkling eyes betray the unusual excitement and pleasure she experiences as she listens to the compliments this renegade *Rizzio* is pouring into her ears, and receives the assiduous attention he has been paying her all the evening.

Mephistopheles and *Don Juan* don't dance, so they block up the doorway, and comment disparagingly on the company, the refreshments, and the music.

'By Jove! Isn't that a pretty girl?' draws out *Mephistopheles*.

'Yes,' replies his companion; 'and can't she flirt?'

'Who's the fellow?'

'Lord Emlyn. She's fooling him nicely. It's a good thing *Vyner's* out of the way.'

'Is that the girl he's engaged to?'

'Girl! She must be seven or eight and twenty, or more. Why, I remember her—let me see—six? no, seven years ago at Portsmouth; and she was then, what is termed in the vulgar tongue, a garrison hack. Vyner 'll have a deuce of a trouble with her, I expect. She was going it pretty hard then; and she's going it again now, you see, and Emlyn will soon be a victim, young fool.'

'Son of the Earl of Bertyn, eh?'

'Yes. Only son; and a good catch.'

'Ah! Shouldn't wonder if Miss Garrison Hack—what's her name? Ah! Gaythorne. Thanks. Well, if Miss Gaythorne chuckled over the other fellow——'

And Mephistopheles passes on to a more convenient spot to criticise the charms of Princess Elizabeth, whose bright eyes scintillate with wonderful vivacity as she chatters to her partner, or taps him playfully with her fan, a performance which causes old dowagers to shrug their fat shoulders, and scraggy wallflowers to sniff about 'that girl.'

Mrs. Benfield is still young enough to thoroughly enjoy a dance in a not-too-crowded ball-room, with good music and good dancers; and her own appreciation of the delights afforded this evening has led her mind away from everything but herself, consequently she does not exercise much authority over the girls she has undertaken to *chaperon*. And the flirtation between Rizzio and Princess Elizabeth has escaped her notice. Indeed, she is too busily engaged herself in vanquishing an over-obdurate matador to criticise the follies of others.

It is evident, though, from the troubled and weary—almost despairing—expression with which

Muriel Gaythorne watches the graceful gyrations of the recreant couple, that it has painfully attracted her attention. Her eyes follow them round and round the room till her head swims; but it is not till they cease waltzing, and seek the cool refuge of an adjoining conservatory, that she renews the arduous task of testing the conversational powers of a young and very nervous jester, who apparently is more of a fool even than his dress betokens.

Muriel, in spite of her anxiety about Milly, has contrived to look unusually charming to-night. Her long black velvet and swansdown train, with her pearl-bestudded Marie Stuart cap, all harmonise wonderfully with her unobtrusive beauty. It is strange that she, Milly, and Lord Emlyn should have chosen to represent contemporaneous characters; but the trouble in this pseudo-Mary's face, and the aching at her heart, are not the result of Rizzio's desertion of her for her natural enemy Elizabeth.

It is not until two or three dances later that Muriel contrives to speak to Milly. And then, in answer to her caution, she only receives a petulant gesture, with 'I am perfectly well able to take care of myself.' And, after this, she loses sight of her self-imposed charge, and devotes herself successively to the entertainment of a grand monarch, a pirate, and a blue satin Romeo; the latter is not young enough to successfully delude his partners into the belief that he is a most lover-like gentleman, and as his age incapacitates him for pleasant dancing, and the 'Soldaten Lieder' is jarring discordantly in her ears, Muriel lures him to the supper-room, where she is met by Mrs. Benfield, who rushes towards her with an italicised exclamation of

'How glad I am to find you, my dear Muriel! I am *longing* to hear about poor Milly. What *was* the matter with her? I could not find you *anywhere*, for really these crowded ball-rooms——'

'But what about Milly?' inquires Muriel, anxiously, as she frees her arm from that of her partner.

'Milly? Oh, poor child! I thought you knew. It seemed she turned suddenly quite faint, and went home by herself, not wishing to destroy our amusement. Everard assured me he would see her safely into the carriage.'

'Milly ill!' cries Muriel. 'I must go to her. Indeed, I must, dear Mrs. Benfield,' in answer to a remonstrance. 'I cannot bear to think of her ill at home, and—alone;' and, without further comment, she again seizes the arm of her Romeo, who has been dejectedly standing apart, and almost forces him to run back through the corridor, as she tries to make him understand, in a stream of quick, incoherent words, that she wishes to see Lord Emlyn. At the entrance to the ball-room, however, she meets her partnerless jester, and asks him if he has seen the object of her search.

'No,' he answers, sidgiting beneath her anxious scrutiny till his many bells tinkle. 'I have not seen him since he took Miss Gaythorne to her carriage, about three-quarters of an hour ago.'

A horrible suspicion crosses her mind. Her antiquated Romeo, at last comprehending her wish, sends her back in his own carriage, and returns to the ball-room to spot another victim, with the hope that she may succumb more speedily to his blue satin charms than has done the impetuous Mary, Queen of Scots.

Rymer Lodge is only a mile distant from the Assembly Rooms, so that within fifteen minutes Muriel has arrived. She leaps out of the carriage, dragging her heavy train after her, and asks of the astonished servant—

'How long has Miss Millicent Gaythorne been home?'

'Nobody has come home yet,' replies the man, staring; and Muriel further confirms his belief that she is destined for Bedlam by rushing upstairs like a whirlwind.

'Where can Milly be?' she questions, as she pauses at the bed-room door. On entering, more than her very worst fears are confirmed. Hastily thrown down on the bed is Milly's white satin dress, and all her ornaments are scattered on the table. Then she has been home! But how she contrived to enter the house without the cognisance of the servants is a mystery which Muriel has not the time to solve at present.

Good heavens! If she should have—— and Muriel turns sick with fear and wild presentiment as she snatches up a little pencilled note, and tears it open. For a moment, after reading its contents, her brain swims, and she clutches hold of the table to support herself. That it should have culminated in this is more than she can realise at once. She had never anticipated more than that, perhaps, Milly had been persuaded by her foolish admirer to take a moonlight walk or drive. But this——

She does not hesitate a moment when her equanimity is restored, and her head has ceased to whirl. She almost rips off her own finery, and hastily clothes herself in her morning dress and grey waterproof cloak. In ten minutes she is equipped for her madly projected midnight excursion. Before

leaving the house she finds the latch-key in Mrs. Benfield's bedroom, and rapidly and softly descends the staircase. It is twelve by the dining-room clock. As quietly as possible she opens the hall-door, using the key to close it, so that no sound could be audible to the inmates, and walks hurriedly off in the direction of Burwood station.

And Hubert returns to-morrow! This reflection causes Muriel to quicken her walk to a run as she contemplates the misery she may probably avert, if successful. It has been the girl's purgatory, during the last fortnight, to note Milly's open encouragement of Lord Emlyn's increasing attentions; and all her influence has been used to dissuade her thoughtless cousin from her vain, misguided folly. But threats, hopes, entreaties, prayers, all have proved futile! Milly rebelled against Muriel's advice, and at last nearly quarrelled with her. One unhappy day, Muriel reluctantly overheard some words from Lord Emlyn, which were sufficient in themselves to convince her of the truth of her surmises, and she had been wretched ever since. Milly had, in consequence, treated Lord Emlyn with marked indifference until the night of the ball; but this—all this miserable escapade must have been a pre-concerted plan.

Muriel's sad thoughts are here disturbed by the rumbling of some ancient vehicle advancing up the narrow and lonely lane. Fortune has favoured her in the shape of a tumble-down cab, drawn by an attenuated Rosinante, and driven by a corpulent old cabman, weighty enough in himself to destroy the pace of a Pegasus. Necessity overrules these disadvantages, and she bids him convey her with all possible speed to the station, and ten minutes sees her at her destination.

Leaving her fat Jehu unpaid, she demands of a porter 'whether the 12.45 has yet started?'

'Twenty more minutes. Down train due first,' answers that official with the distinguishing brevity of his race.

Muriel breathes more freely. There still remains to her a chance by which she can separate the delinquents. Hurrying past the porters and a sprinkling of passengers, who stare to see so young a girl alone at this time of night, and comment unfavourably on the fact, she directs her steps to the waiting-room, which is empty. The refreshment-room is closed; the fugitives are not on the platform; Muriel's nocturnal pilgrimage seems likely to prove a wild-goose chase, when she suddenly recollects that a second-class waiting-room is to be found on the other side of the station. And here her search ends. There are two women in the room. One is a brown, wrinkled old peasant; the other is a golden-haired girl—it is Milly! Muriel approaches, and touches her gently. Milly turns round quickly, and a deadly terror crosses her face as she exclaims, 'Muriel! You here?'

'Yes, Milly,' says Muriel, quietly, 'I have come to take you home.'

'Home? You do not know what you ask.'

'Come to the other waiting-room,' says Muriel, taking her arm, 'we shall be alone there;' and she will listen to no remonstrance, but compels her reluctantly to follow her.

'Are you mad, Muriel?' asks Milly, hoarsely.

'It is I who should ask that of you. But come; we have no time to lose. I have a cab here.'

'It is useless'—obstinately—'I have promised Everard, and I cannot break my word.'

'You have thought lightly

enough of keeping your vow to Hubert,' says Muriel, calmly.

Milly colours, and remains doggedly inexorable.

'Milly!' cries Muriel, in despair, 'I must take you back. Be persuaded, dear. Think how madly you are behaving, and return with me while there is yet time.'

'I cannot, and he will be looking for me now. I must go back to the other room.'

'Milly, you shall not whilst I have a breath of strength in me. Where is he now?'

'Gone to engage a carriage.'

'Which he alone must occupy! Come, Milly; be sensible;' and then, as she sees the small effect of her entreaties, she adds, more vehemently and passionately, 'You must and shall come. Remember your poor mother. It will kill her, Milly. And Hubert. Think of the utter shame you will bring both on yourself and the man whom you have sworn to love. Milly, for God's sake hear me, and have mercy on all who love you. Think of your own fair name, and Hubert's love.'

And Muriel, perceiving that her sincere eloquence is lost on the obdurate girl beside her, sinks into a chair and bursts into a paroxysm of tears as she realises how small is her influence over Milly's actions, and how futile may prove the object of her daring errand. But her tears cause Milly's to flow; and the better nature of the latter being aroused, and perhaps as the advisability of abandoning her foolish elopement occurs to her, she stoops down and kisses her poor despairing cousin, and whispers, 'It shall be as you wish, Muriel.'

Muriel starts up. 'You will return, Milly? Thank you, darling!' as if it were a favour conferred. 'Come then, you must go at once;' hastily drying her tears.

'But Everard?'

'Leave everything to me. Here is the latch-key, and my purse. Drive up to within a hundred yards of the house; then walk the rest, and let yourself in as quietly as possible, and await my arrival in the bed-room. I shall follow shortly. Here, quick. Change cloaks and hats.' And Muriel substitutes Milly's long dark blue cloak and seal-skin hat for her own grey waterproof and black bonnet, and, with a hasty kiss, sends the bewildered girl off to find her way home behind Corpulence and Rosinante.

She heaves an irrepressible sigh of relief as she hears the cab rattle off towards Rymer Lodge; she then returns to the second-class waiting-room, there to tackle the most difficult part of her task. It is not above three minutes before a man enters the room. Muriel immediately rises, and advances to meet him.

'Lord Emlyn,' she commences, 'I have to—,' and then stops dead, as she perceives she has made a mistake.

Good Heavens! It is Hubert Vyner!

She starts back with an exclamation of surprise, and hastily draws down her veil. Too late! He has recognised her!

'Muriel Gaythorne?' he exclaims, in blankest astonishment, 'what in Heaven's name are you doing here by yourself?'

Muriel is silent. She is utterly at a loss how to explain matters to him; but before she can frame an answer of any description, Lord Emlyn has entered, and advancing to her, says—

'Come, dear, we have not a minute to lose. Our train is due.'

'And pray, my Lord, what authority have you over this lady's actions?' demands Hubert, in stern and peremptory a voice that

Lord Emlyn's countenance betrays as much fear as surprise when he turns to confront his assailant.

It is for him to be startled now, and if he had received a telegraphic summons to the infernal regions, he could not have been more taken aback.

'Hubert Vyner?' he gasps.

'Yes, Hubert Vyner! It is fortunate for Miss Gaythorne that I have returned some few hours earlier than was originally my intention, and have thus been enabled to rescue her from a coward and a——'

'Hold, sir!' cries Lord Emlyn. 'She is here by her own free will.'

'Is this so?' asks Hubert of the pale and trembling Muriel.

'Yes!' in a scarcely audible voice, with her veil down, and her face averted from Lord Emlyn.

'But as Miss Gaythorne is under age, Lord Emlyn, I take upon myself the responsibility of restoring her to her friends—a responsibility which I, as the future——'

'Yes, yes; I will return with you at once,' interposes Muriel, in time to check a speech which would have resulted in the exposure of her stratagem.

'Well,' says Lord Emlyn, 'as you will. But, by Jove, I'll have my revenge, Miss Gaythorne.'

'That is perfectly immaterial to the lady. Here, porter, fetch me a cab. Knock them up at the inn, if they've gone to bed.'

Lord Emlyn stands apart, twirling his moustache, and looking foolish.

'We may as well take our leave of one another, now,' says Hubert, and, with a bow to Muriel, Lord Emlyn quits the room.

'I must just go and collect my scattered traps,' says Hubert. 'Wait here, Muriel.' And he passes out.

He has not been absent more than a minute or two when Lord

Emlyn hastily re-enters for his travelling-bag, which, in his excessive discomfiture, he had omitted to take with him. He does not expect to find the room still occupied, and apologises for the intrusion. Muriel is in such a tremor of nervous agitation and excitement, that her lips refuse to utter the words she is anxious to say. He hesitates a moment, and then, advancing towards her, says in a tone of gentle reproach, 'Is it possible, Milly, that you speak the truth when you assert that you willingly return with Hubert Vyner? Do you mean to say that a straw will turn the current of your affections one way or the other? I will not believe it, my darling! It was fear that prompted your bitter words. Come; there is yet time to prove your affection for me.' And he puts his arm round her waist. Muriel shrinks backward from his embrace, and is silent.

'Answer me, Milly—I entreat you,' he exclaims more vehemently; 'do you mean to blast my life by your silence and treachery?'

It suddenly flashes across Muriel's mind that it would be fatal to the successful concealment of the secret from Hubert, did she not confess her identity to the man before her, so she quietly raises her veil, and looking him full in the face, says—

'You are mistaken, Lord Emlyn. I am not Milly, but Muriel Gaythorne.'

'Miss Muriel Gaythorne! by all that's wonderful.'

'Yes; and I beg that for all our sakes, you will never betray the deception I have practised to-night. Promise me, Lord Emlyn; swear it!' she exclaims passionately as she seizes his arm.

He hardly realises her words, but asks—'Milly? Where is she?'

'Safe at Rymer Lodge, by this

time. I followed you both, and have sent her back in the cab. She will reach home before Mrs. Benfield's return. But I hear footsteps—promise me, again I ask you—promise never to tell the truth. Leave Milly's name out of the affair. I am the one to blame now.'

'I promise,' he answers mechanically.

He has barely recovered his astonishment yet. The rapid succession of events, the unexpected appearance of Hubert Vyner, the mysterious substitution of Muriel for Milly, have completely dazzled him, and he stares vacantly at Muriel, who tremblingly stands before him, with a bright unnatural spot of colour on each cheek.

'Go!' she suddenly exclaims. 'I hear Mr. Vyner's voice. Go! and for God's sake, remember your promise.' He hastily shakes her hand and leaves.

When Hubert Vyner returns to fetch Muriel, he finds her sunk into a chair, by the table, with her head on her outstretched arms, sobbing as if her heart would break.

* * * *

Five years later.

Muriel is sitting with her mother, an active, grey-haired old lady, in the tiny drawing-room of the diminutive dwelling they occupy in Westbourne Park. The same Muriel, more matured perhaps, but still the deep, earnest grey eyes, the gravely sweet smile, and still Muriel Gaythorne.

'Go and put on your things now, dear Muriel. We shall never get out if you delay any more.'

'But, mother, we must stay in, for Lord Emlyn is coming.'

'What? Coming to-day, when you only saw him last night, and then danced a scandalous number of times with him?'

'You must remember, mother,'

says Muriel, gently, and colouring slightly, 'that we are old friends; and one has not much time for talking in a ball-room.'

'Oh, my dear child! "old friends," who mean to remain nothing more than "old friends," don't spend their spare time in following a girl wherever she goes, and singling her out for their attentions and compliments when they meet in public. Depend upon it, Muriel, it only reets with you for you to be my Lady Emlyn, and sooner or later, Countess of Bertyn.'

'Please don't be ridiculous, mamma. Indeed there is no reason to suppose anything of the kind.'

'Fiddlesticks, my dear! Don't go beating about the bush in that way. You must know that Lord Emlyn has paid you as much attention as a man could do. Well, I must go out any way, so you stay and receive him; and the old lady trots out, rather pleased than otherwise at the happy circumstance which enables them to see one another alone, and smiling with gratified pride as she pictures herself the mother-in-law of an earl, and grandmother of little lords and ladies.

Muriel sits down to enjoy herself in idleness with a fascinating novel, and her feet perched on the fender, for it is one of those piercingly cold winter days when the wind and frost seem to penetrate every corner of the house.

She is not reading, however, but dreaming. Of the past? But why should not Muriel Gaythorne be building castles for the future, for a happy smile plays about her mouth, and her mobile features have lost a certain sharpness and austerity which threatened to spoil her beauty when she was still writhing under the disappointment so cruelly inflicted by Hubert Vyner?

Her reverie is suddenly disturbed by a double knock, and she jumps up and commences pushing away refractory locks of hair before the mirror, and arranging her collar and cuffs. Before she has had time to satisfactorily complete this impromptu adornment, her expected visitor is announced, and she runs forward with undoubted pleasure to meet him.

'How do you do, Lord Emlyn? Mamma is out; but I expect her in shortly. Will you wait a little while?'

The invitation is not needed, as Muriel well knows, for he has anticipated it, by taking a chair beside her.

'And how are you after your dance, Miss Gaythorne?'

'Quite well, thank you; and ready for such another to-night.'

'Such another! Yes. Ah! it was very delightful,' and he stretches out his legs and leans back in his chair, in an attitude that expresses perfect enjoyment.

'By-the-by,' says Muriel, smiling, 'we have had some mutual friends to lunch. Can you guess whom?'

'Mrs. Benfield.'

'She is of the singular number. No. Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Vyner.'

'No? By Jove! Have you?' and he pulls his moustache thoughtfully, and stares into the glowing fire.

'I wish you had come in an hour earlier. I should like to have seen the meeting.'

'I can assure you I am very glad I was nowhere within reach. Vyner has never forgiven me; and what on earth should I have said to her?'

'Oh! Milly would soon have put you at your ease. She is accustomed to meet ancient lovers.'

'I was not a lover!'

'Were you not?' with a questioning smile.

'Don't tease me, Muriel. You know well enough how she led me on from compliments to flirtation, and from flirtation to love-making, etc., till—— Well, she was very pretty.'

'Ah me, she hath a lovely face,
God in His mercy give her grace.'

'By-the-by, I wish you would tell me what happened at Rymer Lodge when you arrived there with Vyner?'

He hesitates rather as he makes this request. He is uncertain whether she will comply with it or not.

Muriel's answer is perfectly unhesitating.

'Oh! there was a scene; and Mrs. Benfield cried and stormed, and made insinuations about a "viper;" and Milly held her tongue; and Hubert—well, I suppose he blessed himself that Milly was not as I was.'

'Do you mean to say that he has never known the truth?'

'No one knows the truth, Lord Emlyn, but you and I. My mother was abroad at the time, and is blissfully ignorant of the whole affair. My friends kindly withheld the whole story from her, poor old thing!'

'By Jove! I didn't know you were so fond of Mrs. Vyner as all that!'

'Fond of Mrs. Vyner?' says Muriel quickly, and nettled that he should even imagine such a thing. 'Do you suppose that I did it for *her* sake?'

'I don't suppose it was for your own pleasure. Muriel, if not for hers, for whose sake was it, then?' he asks earnestly, bending towards her, and looking into her eyes.

'It was not for yours!' blurts out Muriel, and then turns away,

colouring in shame for her bluntness.

'Worse luck!' he sighs; but she apparently does not hear his muttered ejaculation. She feels so exasperated that he should dare to suppose she was in love with him—then.

'Forgive me!' she says, suddenly. 'I did not mean to be rude.'

'You are forgiven,' he answers, in a mock-magnanimous tone, to conceal his annoyance.

'Thanks,' she laughs, and then asks, 'How did you contrive to get into the house that night?'

'There are such things as latch-keys, Miss Gaythorne; and Rymer Lodge boasted of two, of which one was in my possession; but please do not ask me disagreeable questions. Tell me about your own motives for behaving as you did.'

'One more question. How about the revenge?' she asks, slyly.

'I gave up my plans of revenge, Muriel, when I found they would not equal yours. You have had a complete revenge on me for my conduct.'

'Would you care to hear all about it?' she asks, and then stops short, questioning why she should tell to this man what no one else knows.

'Of course I should. I have a right to know, have I not, Miss Gaythorne, since I was so closely connected with it all?'

And then Muriel tells him, in a low, hurried voice, the history of her young, passionate love for Hubert Vyner; of her oath to guard Milly from shame for his sake; and of the onus she had to

bear for her supposed elopement with him—Lord Emlyn.

'And you did it all for love of him, Muriel? How good, and noble, and generous of you! I never realised till now how purely unselfish a woman's love can be. And you suffer still, poor child?'

The tears stand in her eyes. He speaks so kindly, and she is so overcome at having raked up the ashes of the past, that she is unable to answer, and lets him retain the hand he has clasped within his own.

'Muriel, do you mean to say you no longer care for him?'

'No, Lord Emlyn. I am very fond of Hubert Vyner still, as a friend, as a brother; but the idol of my younger days is destroyed, and that love is forgotten.'

'Is it true?' he exclaims. 'Is your heart free to love again, Muriel?'

She has released her hand from his grasp, and walked to the window; and he follows her there. The snow flakes are falling heavily outside, and darken the atmosphere; whilst within, the rosy firelight dances about the room, and gives him occasional glimpses of her tear-stained face.

The tears are still streaming down it, and Everard cannot but hope that they are for him, although he hardly dare believe so great a happiness.

'Muriel,' he says gently, and looking into the depths of her eyes, 'shall you ever love again?'

'That, Everard,' she answers, placing her hand in his, whilst her eyes betray the secret, 'is for the future to reveal.'

EVE KENTON.



WEST END NOTES.

PRINCE'S CLUB—BRILLIANT MARRIAGES—THE LAST JEWEL ROBBERY—MR. THOMAS CARLYLE—ARTISTIC HOUSES—TRAFALGAR SQUARE—LADY DUDLEY—THE 'ROLL CALL'—MÉNUS.

THE 'new rule at Prince's' is causing murmurs both loud and deep. A pleasant laxity had obtained, by which the complaisant members presented books of admission cheques to their friends, who thus enjoyed most of the rights of membership. In an evil or awkward hour a gentleman introduced 'a lady of quality,' concerning whom idle tongues had been wagging, with the result of some confusion; and thus an excuse was found for stopping what might have become an abuse, and for closing up the ranks of the club. One piquant result, however, has been the sort of strain on nuptial relations; those who are considered one, socially and politically, becoming violently divorced. Husbands can enter where wives may not, and *vice versa*. Some affect to bewail this arrangement; but it is suspected by the Voltairians that these hypocrites are secretly pleased. It is pleaded artfully, 'I would bring my wife here; but what can I do?' The rule of the club is imperative. It would be quixotic to retire,' &c. Thus does the rogue justify the matter; and thus the club has been filled with such 'odds and ends' as wifeless husbands, husbandless wives, to which might be added motherless daughters and orphaned mammas.

Now that the covered rink is opened, the scene on dark winter's evenings is curious and original. The constant clatter of the rolling wheels, the flying figures, the sudden cataclasm, the mixed sound of scraping, smashing, and final 'thud' as a fellow-creature bites the asphalt, or falls, the gyrations of

the fair, all form a novel and exciting spectacle. Among the most skilful and industrious skaters are the Marquis of C— and the Messrs. Murietta, so conspicuous at polo, Lady A— C—, and Lady F—.

As the season draws on, of course the eagerness to join increases. The lists are swelled by vast numbers, the day of whose admission may be set down for the mysterious era when Sundays come in the middle of the week, or when the Greek method of 'cycling' is revived. The regulations say that every one must be proposed and seconded by two members; but the truth is that no average 'Mrs.' or 'Mr.' has a chance of admission, unless taken in hand by an influential member of the committee, which consists of two marquises, five earls, six lords, and three or four fashionable members of Parliament—a serious jury for a City lady to go before. At the last ballot it is whispered that only twenty ladies were admitted.

Here is a subject for reflection, and which the glorious army of dowagers may perpend and inwardly digest. As some families are remarkable for their success in politics, others for the number of sons they have supplied to the law and the army, so certain houses have been conspicuous for their success in what may be called the noble Profession of Marriage. Of course it is in the power of any one to repair some morning with a partner to the neighbouring church, and there undergo the clergyman and his appointed form;

to this easy feat we by no means refer. It is the grand *coups*, the splendid alliances, and, more prodigious still, the series of such, secured by skilful matron for her train of daughters, that extort a cry of admiration, and imply genius of the order of a Turenne or a Pitt. The name of the Duchess of Gordon must be ever mentioned with respect, owing to her skill in this department, and that dogged sense of 'not knowing when she was beaten,' which is the note both of the British soldier and the British mother. This intrepid lady, whose daughters inherited nothing, not even her personal beauty, contrived by her personal exertions to secure as sons-in-law the Dukes of Richmond, Bedford, and Manchester, the Marquis Cornwallis, and a baronet; the last must have seemed as much a *mésalliance* as marrying a footman. Nay, it is said that when one of the dukes was seized with a mortal illness, after the preliminaries only had been arranged, she brought her daughter to attend him to the last with a pre-conjugal devotion and fidelity, and within a year had arranged a new marriage with his brother and heir! We can hear the deep-drawn breath, the wistful exclamation of admiration as some less successful though equally encumbered matron reads this, and, as in the case of Dr. Lynn, the conjuror, wonders 'how it's done.'

But these prodigies are not unknown to our own time. It is curious that Scotch families should have won most distinction in this walk. One branch of the great house of Hamilton, like that of the Hapsburgs—*tu felix Austria nube*—has fortified itself in the most surprising way by connections with a line of illustrious families. The present Duke of Abercorn was a simple Irish mar-

quis, with but a moderate income for a peer, and an average estate in the north of Ireland; but he came of a proud and aspiring stock. The late Marquis, who was Lady Morgan's patron, was one of the haughtiest men of his time; and as evidence of his state, it was reported that the sheets of his bed were of satin or silk (the point is not of importance). The present marquis, whose name, not inappropriately, opens Sir Bernard Burke's grand roll of heraldry, claims to be Duke of Châtelleraut in France, and is one of the three peers who have 'distinct peerages in the three kingdoms.' He began by marrying the Duke of Bedford's daughter, then became a Knight of the Garter and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Of his daughters, one is married to the Earl of Lichfield; a second to the Earl of Durham; a third to the Earl of Dalkeith, who will be Duke of Buccleuch; a fourth to the Earl of Mount-Edgcumbe; a fifth to the Marquis of Lansdowne; a sixth to the Marquis of Blandford, and future Duke of Marlborough. His three sons, too, are in the House of Commons, and his brother sat in the last Parliament.

The Moncrieffes, another family, but of lower degree, have been also singularly fortunate in their alliances. It is curious to find the beautiful daughters of a baronet winning a duke, an earl, and two baronets.

The history of lost jewels—even excluding that of the *collier de la reine*, rehearsed so often—would make a strange contribution to romance. It might appear from such a collection, that the very possession of such things in quantity imparts an Eastern arrogance, with an almost barbaric absence of good taste. This may arise from the sense of power, and from

jewels being the only shape in which Eastern wealth can be displayed on the figure. You cannot appear in a suit of solid gold, or in a waistcoat bordered with cheques and bank-notes; but your wife may display diamonds to the amount of twenty or thirty thousand pounds. It is, as Johnson would say, 'the potentiality of becoming rich beyond the dreams of avarice' at any moment, that may be the cause of this demeanour. A share of eccentricity, too, usually denotes the person who has obtained notoriety for the possession of jewels; and such oddity it would hardly be fanciful to impute to a mysterious power in the gems themselves. The owner must be perpetually hearing lavish compliments on their magnificence and on his own wealth; he must be nervously watchful and anxious as to their safety, jealous of rival owners; and suspicious as to the designs of others, especially of those about him. The names of the late Duke of Brunswick, Princes Demidoff and Esterhazy will at once suggest themselves.

There is something splendid in the robbery of magnificent jewels, and it may be conceived how so daring and successful a one as the recent Dudley *coup* must have raised the reputation of the Toby Crackit who operated. Yet there was a something *parvens* in the fashion in which the loss was accepted. One would have looked for the splendid indifference of the *grand seigneur*; the ordering up 'more carriages and four'; instead there was a fussiness and annoyance inconsistent with the 'noblesse oblige' principle, and an undue eagerness to 'get the things back,' shown by the awkward and unbecoming promise of impunity should the articles be restored. The most piquantly welcome ele-

ment in the transaction was the letter of Lord Dudley's father-in-law, and which reflects the sultanian dignity of one who is connected with jewels. It is worth preserving:—

SIR,—In case the extract from the "Echo" copied into your journal, might mislead those of your readers who are interested in the case, I think it right to correct one or two errors in that statement. The jewels lost were not "The Dudley Case," and were not worth 50,000*l*. The case lost was one containing Lady Dudley's jewels, many of which had been presented to her by Lord Dudley and others by friends, and one valuable bracelet presented by the town of Dudley. The total loss in money value was, I believe, about 15,000*l*. The case was not laid down on the platform by the servant in charge (as described in the "Echo"), but was taken from under the foot of Lady Dudley's maid, who placed it there for safety on alighting from the cab which took her to the station, whilst busied in receiving *other* property belonging to Lady Dudley from the *other* occupant of the cab. There was no crowd present. I may mention that *Lady Dudley's maid is a stout, middle-aged Scotchwoman, who was with Lady Dudley before she married, and there can be no doubt as to her faithfulness and honesty.*

After deduction of all these bewildering 'cases' (what is the mysterious 'Dudley Case'?), and the complaisant enumeration of the property, the fashionable world must, at least, be grateful for the distinction between 'the servant in charge,' who did *not* lay 'the case' on the platform, and who was probably 'the other occupant of the cab,' and 'Lady Dudley's maid.' The little biography of 'Lady Dudley's maid' is really delightful. This valuable woman,

it will be seen, could perform no less than three operations at the same moment. She could 'alight from a cab,' be 'busied in receiving property from the occupant,' and place the case, for safety, 'under her foot.' Further, she was 'stout and middle-aged,'—and therefore there could be no doubt as to her faithfulness and honesty,—youth and leanness being notoriously associated with treachery and dishonesty. Altogether, letter-writing is not the baronet's strong point—he will pardon us saying so: or his style seems to have been affected by the jewel euthanasia of his son-in-law.

One of the most interesting characters of our time is Mr. Thomas Carlyle. There is something so thoroughly genuine, so direct and simple, in his nature, that those who have been in his society—and this is now becoming a rarer and rarer privilege—own to a charm and attraction that they have never before experienced. He has, too, a quaint humour, of which only the few have an idea: the parrot critics, after their manner, talking of 'Carlylese' and 'dialect,' and 'mannerisms,' hopelessly ignorant of the fact that his mode of expression is but the *form* of his thoughts, which could not be expressed in any other mode. It is, therefore, no affectation or mannerism, but, on the contrary, a genuine simplicity, as being the directest mode of expressing himself. Mr. Disraeli must have been in his dreamiest mood when he fancied that his offer of those tinsel letters, 'G.C.B.,' would have been accepted—or, indeed, have been an appropriate inducement—though of course intended as a compliment. What a curiously quaint flavour is in his letters! Who could write *on shoes*, so well to the point, and with such purpose, as

he does in the following little screed, addressed to a West End tradesman?—

'DEAR SIR,—Not for your sake alone, but for that of a Public suffering much in its feet, I am willing to testify that you have rendered me complete and unexpected relief in that particular; and in short, on trial after trial, that you seem to me to possess, in signal contrast to so very many of your brethren, the actual art of making shoes which are easy to the wearer. My thanks to you are emphatic and sincere.

'T. CARLYLE.

'5, Cheyne Row, Chelsea,
'10th July, 1868.'

There is here some of the philosophy of the 'Sartor Resartus.' I myself—*moi qui vous parle*—have heard him decant, with delightful effect, on the same subject, dwelling on the decay of shoe-making, and the merits of a pair gotten some sixty or seventy years ago, at Dumfries, I think; the foot, he seemed to hint, being the last element that now enters into the fantasy of the maker. This non-relation of the thing desired to its purpose is part of the 'shoddy' system of our day. To hear him talk, his 'churchwarden' pipe in hand, every word enriched by that broad Scotch accent, is a delightful entertainment.

The connoisseur in houses, as he strays towards Kensington, past the Albert Hall, will find some novelties that will interest him. A well-built, well-laid-out house is indeed as pleasing and satisfactory as a picture or choice bit of china. Some of the unassuming old brick mansions in Portman Square, or Grosvenor Street, are artistic in what may seem so trifling a thing as the proportion of the windows to the wall in

which they are pierced, and as specimens of the treatment of brickwork. The little old-fashioned tenement near the Albert Hall, known as Eden Lodge, with its squeezed little doors, has lately given place to a many-gabled structure with a tiled roof, which suggests some antique farmhouse. There is a certain quaintness in this building; but the imitation of the old model has been carried out too closely. The house seems too much broken up into corners, crannies, and projections, and rather suggests the discomforts and little accommodation of the time to which it belongs. Still, the red tiles, tall chimneys, the little belfry, and scraps of neat iron-work are welcome enough. It is to be feared that repairs after storms will be constant and costly; as all these corners, projections, &c., offer convenient purchase to the gale. A quarter of a mile farther down we come to Palace Gate; where we may turn down to the left for a few moments. Here is the mansion of a well-known artist, fast approaching completion, of a dark-red brick, edged with a cream-coloured stone. Much would be expected in the home of an artist—and of such an artist—under whose inspiration Mr. Hardwicke, the architect, must have worked. Yet the result is scarcely striking. It appears to be too tall and spare, and suggests that a storey had been added, as an afterthought. It looks, too, as though there had been ‘choppings and changes’ to suit new-found requirements of the owner. This supposition is probably gratuitous; still, if it be so, the house seems to want artistic unity. Some two or three numbers lower down is a delightfully piquant modern-antique, of a faintly-toned red and yellow brickwork (the old-fashioned blend), after the Hatfield House pattern.

Here are the small panes in white frames; while the centre niche is filled, very appropriately, with a handsome blue Nankin jar—which might prompt Leigh Hunt to knock respectfully and ask to see the owner, to thank him for his attention to the public. There is a pleasant quaintness in the idea, to say nothing of an agreeable bit of colour. The iron railwork of balcony and area is admirable for its simplicity and good effect, the iron being treated according to its natural properties. The side of the house, instead of offering a shabby baldness, as though it were the front only that deserved decoration, is slightly ornamented, in excellent taste; the windows being disposed with a pleasant straggling irregularity; while the owner’s ‘device,’ the date of erection, &c., is wrought upon a sort of shield. The only objection that might be taken to this charming yet unpretending little mansion is the brick porch, which descends with the steps and follows the same slope. This gives a kind of awkward air, and seems, at first, to cut off all access to the hall-door. Near it are some pretty houses of a French pattern, and a little below, another curious ‘Hatfield House’ building. At the corner of the highroad is the Duke of Bedford’s solidly-built villa, in capacity an artfully disguised mansion; and in front, Mr. John Forster’s handsome house, the residence of a true *littérateur*. Such is this interesting little cluster of tenements; which, from the enormous value of the ground, and the prestige of the builders—the Cubitts—and the wealth of the owners, exhibits house-building under its most satisfactory conditions.

‘Proceed we now,’ as the delightful ‘Little Pedlington Guide’ has it, a short way into Kensington,

and we pass the huge palace which Baron Grant has just reared. This edifice seems the apotheosis of successful finance, and can scarcely be surveyed by unsuccessful speculators with feelings of satisfaction. This obese pile seems to stand 'with its hands in its breeches-pockets,' and to be as 'loud' in its dress as a Jewish merchant on 'Change. We miss the old 'Kensington House' which lately stood there, with its regiment of tall windows, and cheerful red and ancient roof. There the French Duchess lived and held her court. There, too, nearly a hundred years later, the poor French *émigrés* opened their school, and 'Monsieur' came; and, finally—only the other day—a thriving lunatic asylum was established. These changes and levellings are not to be welcomed.

A little intelligence might do a great deal for Trafalgar Square. At the present moment it is laid out with the least possible effect. The basins of the fountains are monstrously out of proportion with the space: those in the Place de la Concorde are not so big. The long row of stone posts are unmeaning, and lessen the idea of space, and should be removed. The twisted stair that leads down from the National Gallery is awkward and clumsy. Finally, the statues, execrable themselves, are disposed after no symmetrical principle. An obvious improvement would be a broad flight of steps from the road in front of the Gallery, which would furnish the idea of space. The column is a most unfortunate ornament, and makes the place look half as small as it is. A plan from a skilled Frenchman, who had been employed under M. Hausmann, would be the safest mode of beginning the work.

As the portrait of Lady Dudley adorns every stationer's window, and invites the constant criticism of every loungeur and *flaneur*, we also may join the admiring crowd, and offer our respectful homage. This charming picture is the work of the cunning Bergamasco of St. Petersburg, to whom most of the royalties of the world have sat. Nothing more delicate or interesting can be conceived than this face, with its refined outlines, velvety surface, and piquant expression of quiet enjoyment, so opposed to the accepted type of aristocratic languor. To sit to a photographer is an art, and requires as an element an absence of affectation; as ordinarily the sitter, under the responsibility of the situation, supplies a constrained and intense expression which is unfamiliar to his friends. Such is wholly wanting in this agreeable picture, now enshrined in many a sumptuous photographic album (welcome plank, after shipwreck, for the guests who come up from the dinner-table), and criticised a thousand times. Here is one of the thousand and one gratifying shapes of celebrity, in its own way not unacceptable. We have long since gone back to the days of 'Lofty' in 'The Good-natured Man,' who asks, when his word is doubted, was it for this that his head was 'stuck in the print-shops.' Everybody's head appears now to be 'stuck in the print-shops.' Nothing, indeed, is more curious than the miscellany of 'cartes' in a window. The notorious *bouffe* actress side by side with Lady —, and the Dean of — in company with Miss —, whose claims to celebrity or notoriety are of a kind more hinted at than declared. Perhaps the most effective faces are those of Dr. Manning and Dr. Newman, the former per-

haps one of the most spiritual conceivable. The 'Beautiful Rousby' appears at every turn, and, it must be said, deserves this appreciation. The 'Ape' portraits seem to be falling off, either from the selection of unfamiliar and sometimes obscure persons, or from a sameness of treatment. It may be said, indeed, that when an artist looks merely for the earthy and unintellectual in a face, he is certain to want variety, as these elements nearly always find the same expression. If we turn over a volume of these clever caricatures, we shall notice a sort of Darwinised tone—a certain animal monstrosity tending to general ugliness. For a change, Mr. Pellegrini should now look for what is pleasing and intelligent in human nature; but then perhaps, like Thackeray's Amelias and other good young ladies, he would become uninteresting. How curious must be this artist's position in society; how every lion hitherto undrawn must look askance at him at the evening party. Fancy the hostess coming to Lord — with the alarming intimation, 'Would you allow me to introduce Mr. Pellegrini to you?' It has been said, indeed, that the artist frankly informs the victims of the celebrity destined; and this at once removes the *gêne* of the situation. Imagine, too, the shock some Saturday morning as you walk the streets and see yourself at every news-vendor's door in the little black frame, some chuckling faces surveying the gentle stoop which has been converted into a hump, the placid smile become a comic grin, and that short-sightedness changed into a sort of squint; yet the whole so exceedingly like. Some of them are, indeed, masterly—masterly in the psychological element, as it may be called, those little touches of manner and cha-

acter which can hardly be described. What violin-player has not recognised the attitude of H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh in the orchestra, the violin on the knee, the finger delicately touching the string to feel if it be in tune, the figure on the edge of the stool, the whole attitude belonging to the indescribable and fantastic associations, masonic almost, between the violinist and his instrument. Every one has noticed those mysterious communings and coquettings which the performer holds with his instrument in the intervals of the performance. Here is, indeed, proof that Mr. Pellegrini is an 'introseeing' artist.

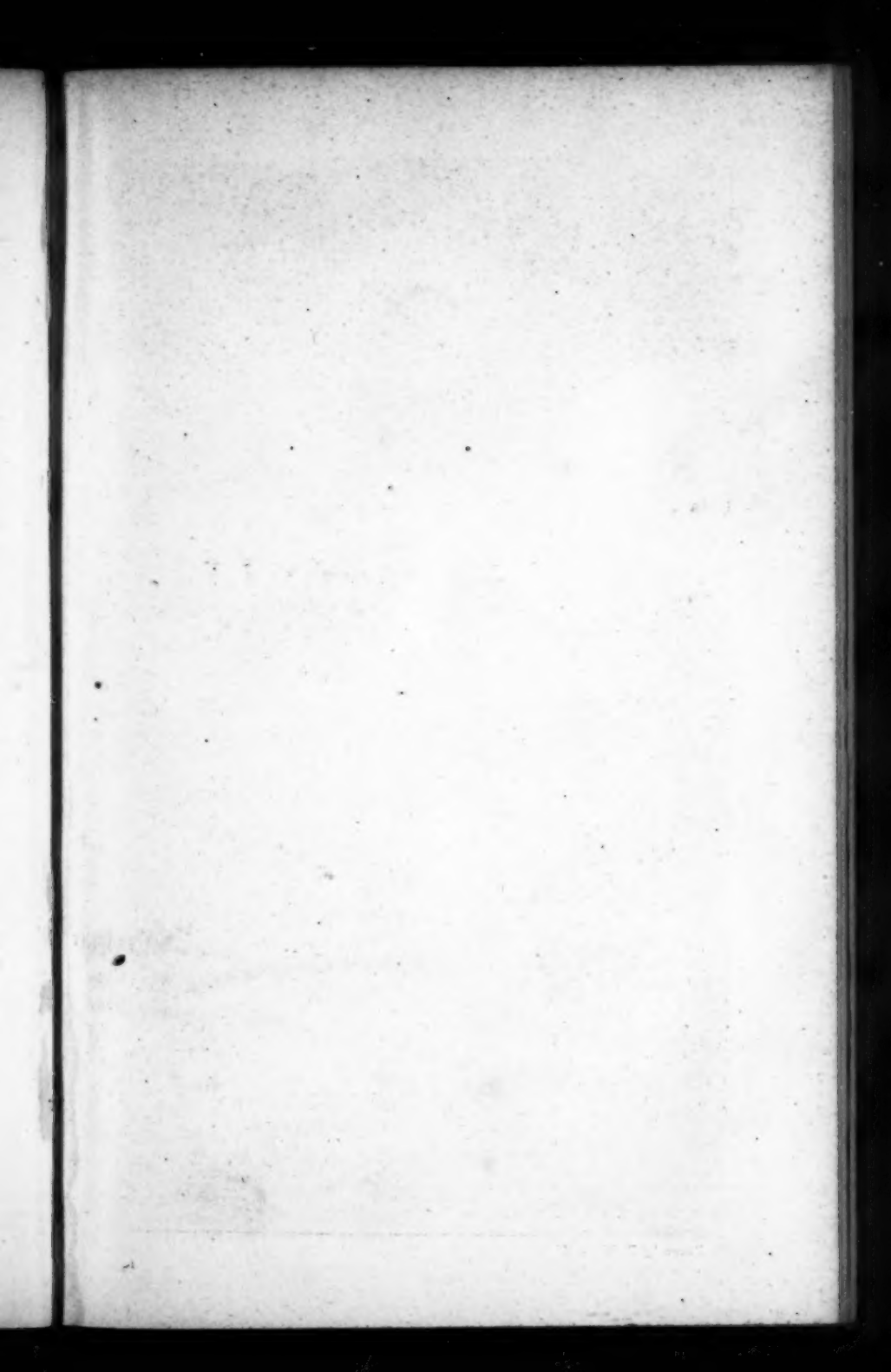
The irrepressible 'Roll Call' has come back to town to be a special show, after being taken round some of the great cities. This fairly-painted picture will always furnish a valuable lesson as to how to obtain popularity. A statesman once kept what he called his 'foolometer,' a dull country member, whose opinion he anxiously inquired after, as nicely representing that of the vast stupid masses. The same principle is at the root of the success of some of those hugely successful penny papers and religious periodicals; cleverness, and even genius, being exerted in suiting the production to the taste and capacity of the consumer. By chance or design, the picture was fitted nicely to the intelligence of the herd that swarms to shilling exhibitions: the Prince of Wales's compliment—which some protest was inspired by the belief that it was the work of a well-known surgeon of the same name—touched the 'Court Newsman' chord, the impulse became uncontrollable, and the day was won. Merit cannot be denied to the lady artist, and she may be sym-

pathised with in her triumph. But no one can have patience with the droves of indiscriminating, gaping admirers, whom it was almost revolting to see struggling and squeezing past the policeman to get a good view, and whose raptures were as unmeaning as they were ignorant. Close by was Alma Tadema's noble picture of 'The Connoisseurs,' in which was grace, refinement, surprising power, and much of the qualities found in the works of the great masters; but this the herd could not see. Pearls indeed cast to—but these visitors were on two legs, so the offensive remark does not apply. But, as we said, the man that would win what may be called a vulgar success would do well to give serious study to this picture—to analyse it carefully, and abstract the chief elements. This process, if it does not help him to select, will at least show him what he must avoid, if he would 'hit' the public. Were I an artist, I would desperately and invariably consult a little coterie formed of my own private cook, of the greengrocer, the apothecary's wife—going no higher than the curate's and music master's daughters. Were they enthusiastic, success was assured.

Among the many little escapades of fashion, none have been pushed to more extravagant lengths than the decoration of the dinner-table. The costly devices that have been contrived to ornament it have ended in imparting a tawdry and vulgar air. There are what our lively young men call 'dodges' of blue china and jewelled glass for holding flowers, salt, and other things. All such are out of keeping with the pure simplicity of 'napery.' The latest craze seems to be to run riot in conceits for the *menu*. There are

florid-coloured pictures, in the Rimmel manner, of pink boys gamboling and struggling among the *rots* and *relevées*. The little card willow-pattern plates were piquant at first, but are trifling and ordinary. Then we had china scrolls, resting on some support, or propped up between a pair of white cupids. But the last effort shows the depth to which excessive realism can lead, and how dangerously close it borders on vulgarity. You dispose along your showy table a number of well-modelled 'sandwich-men'—their shuffling, out-at-elbows-air properly expressed, broken-down soldiers, shabby-genteel fellows, like the wretched beings in Mr. Fildes' touching picture—and hang on their shoulders the regular boards of card, on which is written a list of your dishes. Some of the more vapid guests—belonging to the class that offers 'to pull crackers' with the lady sitting beside them—and what a mysterious type of mind that is—are sure to welcome these fantastic trifles with delight. They even take up the little figures in their hands—which furnish them with an opening for a new topic. The correct in taste and the more judicious will return to the simple china tablet, on which the *chef* has written, in his own *batterie-de-cuisine* writing, the names of his dishes. On the old principle of the undecorated Lord Castle-reagh's being the most *décoré* of the party, the most elegant table will be that which offers the finest glass, china, and damask. It is your people of bad taste and *ton* who are addicted to nicknacks, who buy 'patent' things, and who send round after dinner a travelling liqueur stand made in the shape of a silver locomotive! It seems incredible; but such things have been seen at certain houses.

THE MAN IN THE MARK.





Drawn by R. Wagner.]

'TWO, COMPANY ; THREE, NONE.'

LONDON SOCIETY.

APRIL, 1875.

ABOVE SUSPICION.

By Mrs. J. H. RIBBELL.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNCLE AND NIECE.

'I am afraid it is impossible to make terms with the fellow without buying him,' said Mr. Irwin, in answer to his niece's entreaty; 'and there is nothing of which I have such a dread as putting myself into the power of any human being.'

'But if you are in his power already, what?' she suggested.

'I should be getting myself more in his power if I began paying him for silence.'

'In what way?'

'Why, his demands would go on increasing till the burden became unendurable—besides, there may be fifty other people who recollect me perfectly.'

'I thought you said he would not have recognised you, had it not been for the unfortunate meeting with—my mother.'

'He had some remembrance of me before that. Oh, Bella! what would I not give to be able to begin my life over again with my present experience! I think the happiest man on earth must be he who, having no past he is afraid to remember, can walk in the present, and on to face the future without dread.'

She did not answer. She was thinking how frequently the same

idea had occurred to her: how enviable, spite of its cares, its shifts, its debts and its humiliations, Mr. Wright's lot had often seemed when contrasted with her own.

A life which held nothing in it to be concealed was her notion of an existence to be envied.

We have each and all our ideal of perfect happiness. Mr. Wright's was to have always five pounds in his pocket, and no duns at his gates. Miss Miles, to be able to speak freely without fear, and to feel she could discuss any subject concerning her parents and her childhood without remorse.

To some of the old-fashioned women to some of the best of grandmothers and fair, faithful daughters—Bella Leigh—this girl had given back the qualities which made her shrink when she was forced to back up the honor of her father's condition with the husband's honor another.

There had been a time when she thought her uncle would have done wisely to tell her of Mr. Wright and Selina and give the story of her life as it really was; but she thought on no longer. Life at Fiddlers' Hall had taught her more had seemed to